

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

MISS HALCOMBE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

JULY 5TH. I remained leaning on the window-sill for nearly a quarter of an hour, looking out absently into the black darkness, and hearing nothing, except, now and then, the voices of the servants, or the distant sound of a closing door, in the lower part of the house.

Just as I was turning away wearily from the window, to go back to the bedroom, and make a second attempt to complete the unfinished entry in my journal, I smelt the odour of tobacco-smoke, stealing towards me on the heavy night air. The next moment I saw a tiny red spark advancing from the farther end of the house in the pitch darkness. I heard no footsteps, and I could see nothing but the spark. It travelled along in the night; passed the window at which I was standing; and stopped opposite my bedroom window, inside which I had left the light burning on the dressing-table.

The spark remained stationary, for a moment, then moved back again in the direction from which it had advanced. As I followed its progress, I saw a second red spark, larger than the first, approaching from the distance. The two met together in the darkness. Remembering who smoked cigarettes, and who smoked cigars, I inferred, immediately, that the Count had come out first to look and listen, under my window, and that Sir Percival had afterwards joined him. They must both have been walking on the lawn—or I should certainly have heard Sir Percival's heavy footfall, though the Count's soft step might have escaped me, even on the gravel walk.

I waited quietly at the window, certain that they could neither of them see me, in the darkness of the room.

"What's the matter?" I heard Sir Percival say, in a low voice. "Why don't you come in and sit down?"

"I want to see the light out of that window," replied the Count, softly.

"What harm does the light do?"

"It shows she is not in bed yet. She is sharp enough to suspect something, and bold enough to come down stairs and listen, if she can get the chance. Patience, Percival—patience."

"Humbug! You're always talking of patience."

"I shall talk of something else presently.

My good friend, you are on the edge of your domestic precipice; and if I let you give the women one other chance, on my sacred word of honour, they will push you over it!"

"What the devil do you mean?"

"We will come to our explanations, Percival, when the light is out of that window, and when I have had one little look at the rooms on each side of the library, and a peep at the staircase as well."

They slowly moved away; and the rest of the conversation between them (which had been conducted, throughout, in the same low tones) ceased to be audible. It was no matter. I had heard enough to determine me on justifying the Count's opinion of my sharpness and my courage. Before the red sparks were out of sight in the darkness, I had made up my mind that there should be a listener when those two men sat down to their talk—and that the listener, in spite of all the Count's precautions to the contrary, should be myself. I wanted but one motive to sanction the act to my own conscience, and to give me courage enough for performing it; and that motive I had. Laura's honour, Laura's happiness—Laura's life itself—might depend on my quick ears, and my faithful memory, to-night.

I had heard the Count say that he meant to examine the rooms on each side of the library, and the staircase as well, before he entered on any explanations with Sir Percival. This expression of his intentions was necessarily sufficient to inform me that the library was the room in which he proposed that the conversation should take place. The one moment of time which was long enough to bring me to that conclusion, was also the moment which slowed me a means of baffling his precautions—or, in other words, of hearing what he and Sir Percival said to each other, without the risk of descending at all into the lower regions of the house.

In speaking of the rooms on the ground floor, I have mentioned incidentally the verandah outside them, on which they all opened by means of French windows, extending from the cornice to the floor. The top of this verandah was flat; the rain-water being carried off from it, by pipes, into tanks which helped to supply the house. On the narrow leaden roof, which ran along past the bedrooms, and which was rather less, I should think, than three feet below the sills of the windows, a row of flower-

pots was ranged, with wide intervals between each pot; the whole being protected from falling, in high winds, by an ornamental iron railing along the edge of the roof.

The plan which had now occurred to me was to get out, at my sitting-room window, on to this roof; to creep along noiselessly, till I reached that part of it which was immediately over the library window; and to crouch down between the flower-pots, with my ear against the outer railing. If Sir Percival and the Count sat and smoked to-night, as I had seen them sitting and smoking many nights before, with their chairs close at the open window, and their feet stretched on the zinc garden seats which were placed under the verandah, every word they said to each other above a whisper (and no long conversation, as we all know by experience, can be carried on *in a whisper*) must inevitably reach my ears. If, on the other hand, they chose, to-night, to sit far back inside the room, then, the chances were, that I should hear little or nothing; and, in that case, I must run the far more serious risk of trying to outwit them down stairs.

Strongly as I was fortified in my resolution by the desperate nature of our situation, I hoped most fervently that I might escape this last emergency. My courage was only a woman's courage, after all; and it was very near to failing me, when I thought of trusting myself on the ground floor, at the dead of night, within reach of Sir Percival and the Count.

I went softly back to my bedroom, to try the safer experiment of the verandah roof, first.

A complete change in my dress was imperatively necessary, for many reasons. I took off my silk gown to begin with, because the slightest noise from it, on that still night, might have betrayed me. I next removed the white and cumbersome parts of my underclothing, and replaced them by a petticoat of dark flannel. O'er this, I put my black travelling cloak, and pulled the hood on to my head. In my ordinary evening costume, I took up the room of three men at least. In my present dress, when it was held close about me, no man could have passed through the narrowest spaces more easily than I. The little breadth left on the roof of the verandah, between the flower-pots on one side, and the wall and windows of the house on the other, made this a serious consideration. If I knocked anything down, if I made the least noise, who could say what the consequences might be?

I only waited to put the matches near the candle, before I extinguished it, and groped my way back into the sitting-room. I locked that door, as I had locked my bedroom door—then quietly got out of the window, and cautiously set my feet on the leaden roof of the verandah. My two rooms were at the inner extremity of the new wing of the house in which we all lived; and I had five windows to pass, before I could reach the position it was necessary to take up immediately over the library. The first window belonged to a spare room, which was empty. The second and third windows belonged to Laura's room. The fourth window belonged to

Sir Percival's room. The fifth, belonged to the Countess's room. The others, by which it was not necessary for me to pass, were the windows of the Count's dressing-room, of the bath-room, and of the second empty spare-room.

No sound reached my ears—the black blinding darkness of the night was all round me when I first stood on the verandah, except at that part of it which Madame Fosco's window overlooked. There, at the very place above the library, to which my course was directed—there, I saw a gleam of light! The Countess was not yet in bed.

It was too late to draw back; it was no time to wait. I determined to go on at all hazards, and trust for security to my own caution and to the darkness of the night. "For Laura's sake!" I thought to myself, as I took the first step forward on the roof, with one hand holding my cloak close round me, and the other groping against the wall of the house. It was better to brush close by the wall, than to risk striking my feet against the flower-pots within a few inches of me, on the other side.

I passed the dark window of the spare-room, trying the leaden roof, at each step, with my foot, before I risked resting my weight on it. I passed the dark windows of Laura's room ("God bless her and keep her to-night!"). I passed the dark window of Sir Percival's room. Then, I waited a moment, knelt down, with my hands to support me; and so crept to my position, under the protection of the low wall between the bottom of the lighted window and the verandah roof.

When I ventured to look up at the window itself, I found that the top of it only was open, and that the blind inside was drawn down. While I was looking, I saw the shadow of Madame Fosco pass across the white field of the blind—then pass slowly back again. Thus far, she could not have heard me—or the shadow would surely have stopped at the blind, even if she had wanted courage enough to open the window, and look out?

I placed myself sideways against the railing of the verandah; first ascertaining, by touching them, the position of the flower-pots on either side of me. There was room enough for me to sit between them, and no more. The sweet-scented leaves of the flower on my left hand, just brushed my cheek as I lightly rested my head against the railing.

The first sounds that reached me from below were caused by the opening or closing (most probably the latter) of three doors in succession—the doors, no doubt, leading into the hall, and into the rooms on each side of the library, which the Count had pledged himself to examine. The first object that I saw was the red spark again travelling out into the night, from under the verandah; moving away towards my window; waiting a moment; and then returning to the place from which it had set out.

"The devil take your restlessness! When do you mean to sit down?" growled Sir Percival's voice beneath me.

"Ouf! how hot it is!" said the Count, sighing and puffing wearily.

His exclamation was followed by the scraping of the garden chairs on the tiled pavement under the verandah—the welcome sound which told me they were going to sit close at the window as usual. So far, the chance was mine. The clock in the turret struck the quarter to twelve as they settled themselves in their chairs. I heard Madame Fosco through the open window, yawning; and saw her shadow pass once more across the white field of the blind.

Meanwhile, Sir Percival and the Count began talking together below; now and then dropping their voices a little lower than usual, but never sinking them to a whisper. The strangeness and peril of my situation, the dread, which I could not master, of Madame Fosco's lighted window, made it difficult, almost impossible for me, at first, to keep my presence of mind, and to fix my attention solely on the conversation beneath. For some minutes, I could only succeed in gathering the general substance of it. I understood the Count to say that the one window alight was his wife's; that the ground floor of the house was quite clear; and that they might now speak to each other, without fear of accidents. Sir Percival merely answered by upbraiding his friend with having unjustifiably slighted his wishes and neglected his interests, all through the day. The Count, thereupon, defended himself by declaring that he had been beset by certain troubles and anxieties which had absorbed all his attention, and that the only safe time to come to an explanation, was a time when they could feel certain of being neither interrupted nor overheard. "We are at a serious crisis in our affairs, Percival," he said; "and if we are to decide on the future at all, we must decide secretly to-night."

That sentence of the Count's was the first which my attention was ready enough to master, exactly as it was spoken. From this point, with certain breaks and interruptions, my whole interest fixed breathlessly on the conversation; and I followed it word for word.

"Crisis?" repeated Sir Percival. "It's a worse crisis than you think for, I can tell you!"

"So I should suppose, from your behaviour for the last day or two," returned the other, coolly. "But, wait a little. Before we advance to what I *do not* know, let us be quite certain of what I *do* know. Let us first see if I am right about the time that is past, before I make any proposal to you for the time that is to come."

"Stop till I get the brandy and water. Have some yourself."

"Thank you, Percival. The cold water with pleasure, a spoon, and the basin of sugar. Eau sucrée, my friend—nothing more."

"Sugar and water, for a man of your age!—There! mix your sickly mess. You foreigners are all alike."

"Now, listen, Percival. I will put our position plainly before you, as I understand it; and you shall say if I am right or wrong. You and I both came back to this house from the Continent, with our affairs very seriously embarrassed—"

"Cut it short! I wanted some thousands, and you some hundreds—and, without the money, we were both in a fair way to go to the dogs together. There's the situation. Make what you can of it. Go on."

"Well, Percival, in your own solid English words, you wanted some thousands and I wanted some hundreds; and the only way of getting them was for you to raise the money for your own necessity (with a small margin, beyond, for my poor little hundreds), by the help of your wife. What did I tell you about your wife on our way to England? and what did I tell you again, when we had come here, and when I had seen for myself the sort of woman Miss Halcombe was?"

"How should I know? You talked nineteen to the dozen, I suppose, just as usual."

"I said this: Human ingenuity, my friend, has hitherto only discovered two ways in which a man can manage a woman. One way is to knock her down—a method largely adopted by the brutal lower orders of the people, but utterly abhorrent to the refined and educated classes above them. The other way (much longer, much more difficult, but, in the end, not less certain) is never to accept a provocation at a woman's hands. It holds with animals, it holds with children, and it holds with women, who are nothing but children grown up. Quiet resolution is the one quality the animals, the children, and the women all fail in. If they can once shake this superior quality in their master, they get the better of *him*. If they can never succeed in disturbing it, he gets the better of *them*. I said to you, Remember that plain truth, when you want your wife to help you to the money. I said, Remember it doubly and trebly, in the presence of your wife's sister, Miss Halcombe. Have you remembered it? Not once, in all the complications that have twisted themselves about us in this house. Every provocation that your wife, and her sister, could offer to you, you instantly accepted from them. Your mad temper lost the signature to the deed, lost the ready money, set Miss Halcombe writing to the lawyer, for the first time——"

"First time? what do you mean?"

"This. Miss Halcombe has written to the lawyer for the second time, to-day."

A chair fell on the pavement of the verandah—fell with a crash, as if it had been struck, or kicked down. It was well for me that the Count's revelation roused Sir Percival's anger, as it did. On hearing that I had been again discovered, my self-control failed me at the critical moment; and I started so that the railing, against which I leaned, cracked again. How, in the name of Heaven, had he found me out? The letters had never left my own possession, till I placed them in Fanny's hands at the inn.

"Thank your lucky star," I heard the Count say next, "that you have me in the house, to undo the harm, as fast as you do it. Thank your lucky star that I said, No, when you were mad enough to talk of turning the key to-day on Miss Halcombe, as you turned it, in your mis-

chievous folly, on your wife. Where are your eyes? Can you look at Miss Halcombe, and not see that she has the foresight and the resolution of a man? With that woman for my friend, I would snap these fingers of mine at the world. With that woman for my enemy, I, with all my brains and experience—I, Fosco, cunning as the devil himself, as you have told me a hundred times—I walk, in your English phrase, upon egg-shells! And this grand creature—I drink her health in my sugar and water—this grand creature, who stands in the strength of her love and her courage, firm as a rock between us two, and that poor flimsy pretty blonde wife of yours—this magnificent woman, whom I admire with all my soul, though I oppose her in your interests and in mine, you drive to extremities, as if she was no sharper and no bolder than the rest of her sex. Percival! Percival! you deserve to fail, and you *have* failed."

There was a pause. I write the villain's words about myself, because I mean to remember them, because I hope yet for the day when I may speak out, once for all in his presence, and cast them back, one by one, in his teeth.

Sir Percival was the first to break the silence again.

"Yes, yes; bully and bluster as much as you like," he said, sulkily; "the difficulty about the money is not the only difficulty. You would be for taking strong measures with the women, yourself—if you knew as much as I do."

"We will come to that second difficulty, all in good time," rejoined the Count. "You may confuse yourself, Percival, as much as you please, but you shall not confuse me. Let the question of the money be settled first. Have I convinced your obstinacy? have I shown you that your temper will not let you help yourself?—Or must I go back, and (as you put it in your dear straightforward English) bully and bluster a little more?"

"Pooh! It's easy enough to grumble at me. Say what is to be done—that's a little harder."

"Is it? Bah! This is what is to be done: You give up all direction in the business from to-night; you leave it, for the future, in my hands only. I am talking to a Practical British Man—ha? Well, Practical, will that do for you?"

"What do you propose, if I leave it all to you?"

"Answer me first. Is it to be in my hands or not?"

"Say it is in your hands—what then?"

"A few questions, Percival, to begin with. I must wait a little, yet, to let circumstances guide me; and I must know, in every possible way, what those circumstances are likely to be. There is no time to lose. I have told you already that Miss Halcombe has written to the lawyer to-day, for the second time."

"How did you find it out? What did she say?"

"If I told you, Percival, we should only come back at the end to where we are now. Enough that I have found out—and the finding has caused that trouble and anxiety which made me

so inaccessible to you all through to-day. Now, to refresh my memory about your affairs—it is some time since I talked them over with you. The money has been raised, in the absence of your wife's signature, by means of bills at three months—raised at a cost that makes my poverty-stricken foreign hair stand on end to think of it! When the bills are due, is there really and truly no earthly way of paying them but by the help of your wife?"

"None."

"What! You have no money at the banker's!"

"A few hundreds, when I want as many thousands."

"Have you no other security to borrow upon?"

"Not a shred."

"What have you actually got with your wife, at the present moment?"

"Nothing, but the interest of her twenty thousand pounds—barely enough to pay our daily expenses."

"What do you expect from your wife?"

"Three thousand a year, when her uncle dies."

"A fine fortune, Percival. What sort of a man is this uncle? Old?"

"No—neither old nor young."

"A good-tempered, freely-living man? Married? No—I think my wife told me, not married."

"Of course not. If he was married, and had a son, Lady Glyde would not be next heir to the property. I'll tell you what he is. He's a maudlin, twaddling, selfish fool, and bores everybody who comes near him about the state of his health."

"Men of that sort, Percival, live long, and marry malevolently when you least expect it. I don't give you much, my friend, for your chance of the three thousand a year. Is there nothing more that comes to you from your wife?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing—except in case of her death."

"Aha? in the case of her death."

There was another pause. The Count moved from the verandah to the gravel walk outside. I knew that he had moved, by his voice. "The rain has come at last," I heard him say. It *had* come. The state of my cloak showed that it had been falling thickly for some little time.

The Count went back under the verandah—I heard the chair creak beneath his weight as he sat down in it again.

"Well, Percival," he said; "and, in the case of Lady Glyde's death, what do you get then?"

"If she leaves no children—"

"Which she is likely to do?"

"Which she is not in the least likely to do—"

"Yes?"

"Why, then I get her twenty thousand pounds."

"Paid down?"

"Paid down."

They were silent once more. As their voices



ceased, Madame Fosco's shadow darkened the blind again. Instead of passing this time, it remained, for a moment, quite still. I saw her fingers steal round the corner of the blind, and draw it on one side. The dim white outline of her face, looking out straight over me, appeared behind the window. I kept quite still, shrouded from head to foot in my black cloak. The rain, which was fast wetting me, dripped over the glass, blurred it, and prevented her from seeing anything. "More rain!" I heard her say to herself. She dropped the blind—and I breathed again freely.

The talk went on below me; the Count resuming it, this time.

"Percival! do you care about your wife?"

"Fosco! that's rather a downright question."

"I am a downright man; and I repeat it."

"Why the devil do you look at me in that way?"

"You won't answer me? Well, then; let us say your wife dies before the summer is out—"

"Drop it, Fosco!"

"Let us say your wife dies——"

"Drop it, I tell you!"

"In that case, you would gain twenty thousand pounds; and you would lose——"

"I should lose the chance of three thousand a year."

"The remote chance, Percival—the remote chance only. And you want money, at once. In your position, the gain is certain—the loss doubtful."

"Speak for yourself as well as for me. Some of the money I want has been borrowed for *you*. And if you come to gain, *my* wife's death would be ten thousand pounds in *your* wife's pocket. Sharp as you are, you seem to have conveniently forgotten Madame Fosco's legacy. Don't look at me in that way! I won't have it! What with your looks and your questions, upon my soul, you make my flesh creep!"

"Your flesh? Does flesh mean conscience in English? I speak of your wife's death, as I speak of a possibility. Why not? The respectable lawyers who scribble-scrabble your deeds and your wills, look the deaths of living people in the face. Do lawyers make your flesh creep? Why should I? It is my business to-night, to clear up your position beyond the possibility of mistake—and I have now done it. Here is your position. If your wife lives, you pay those bills with her signature to the parchment. If your wife dies, you pay them with her death."

As he spoke, the light in Madame Fosco's room was extinguished; and the whole second floor of the house was now sunk in darkness.

"Talk! talk!" grumbled Sir Percival. "One would think, to hear you, that my wife's signature to the deed was got already."

"You have left the matter in my hands," retorted the Count; "and I have more than two months before me to turn round in. Say no more about it, if you please, for the present. When the bills are due, you will see for yourself if my 'talk! talk!' is worth something, or

if it is not. And now, Percival, having done with the money-matters, for to-night, I can place my attention at your disposal, if you wish to consult me on that second difficulty, which has mixed itself up with our little embarrassments, and which has so altered you for the worse, that I hardly know you again. Speak, my friend—and pardon me if I shock your fiery national tastes by mixing myself a second glass of sugar-and-water."

"It's very well to say speak," replied Sir Percival, in a far more quiet and more polite tone than he had yet adopted; "but it's not so easy to know how to begin."

"Shall I help you?" suggested the Count. "Shall I give this private difficulty of yours a name? What, if I call it—Anne Catherick?"

"Look here, Fosco, you and I have known each other for a long time; and, if you have helped me out of one or two scrapes before this, I have done the best I could to help you in return, as far as money would go. We have made as many friendly sacrifices, on both sides, as men could; but we have had our secrets from each other, of course—haven't we?"

"You have had a secret from *me*, Percival. There is a skeleton in your cupboard here at Blackwater Park, that has peeped out, in these last few days, at other people besides yourself."

"Well, suppose it has. If it doesn't concern you, you needn't be curious about it, need you?"

"Do I look curious about it?"

"Yes, you do."

"So! so! my face speaks the truth, then? What an immense foundation of good there must be in the nature of a man who arrives at my age, and whose face has not yet lost the habit of speaking the truth!—Come, Glyde! let us be candid one with the other. This secret of yours has sought *me*: I have not sought *it*. Let us say I am curious—do you ask me, as your old friend, to respect your secret, and to leave it, once for all, in your own keeping?"

"Yes—that's just what I do ask."

"Then my curiosity is at an end. It dies in me, from this moment."

"Do you really mean that?"

"What makes you doubt me?"

"I have had some experience, Fosco, of your roundabout ways; and I am not so sure that you won't worm it out of me, after all."

The chair below suddenly creaked again—I felt the trellis-work pillar under me shake from top to bottom. The Count had started to his feet and struck it with his hand, in indignation.

"Percival! Percival!" he cried, passionately, "do you know me no better than that? Has all your experience shown you nothing of my character yet? I am a man of the antique type! I am capable of the most exalted acts of virtue—when I have the chance of performing them. It has been the misfortune of my life that I have had few chances. My conception of friendship is sublime! Is it my fault that your skeleton has peeped out at me? Why do I confess my curiosity? You poor superficial Englishman, it is to magnify my own self-control. I could

draw your secret out of you, if I liked, as I draw this finger out of the palm of my hand—you know I could! But you have appealed to my friendship; and the duties of friendship are sacred to me. See! I trample my base curiosity under my feet. My exalted sentiments lift me above it. Recognise them, Percival! imitate them, Percival! Shake hands—I forgive you."

His voice faltered over the last words—faltered, as if he was actually shedding tears!

Sir Percival confusedly attempted to excuse himself. But the Count was too magnanimous to listen to him.

"No!" he said. "When my friend has wounded me, I can pardon him without apologies. Tell me, in plain words, do you want my help?"

"Yes, badly enough."

"And you can ask for it without compromising yourself?"

"I can try, at any rate."

"Try, then."

"Well, this is how it stands:—I told you, to-day, that I had done my best to find Anne Catherick, and failed."

"Yes; you did."

"Fosco! I'm a lost man, if I don't find her."

"Ha! Is it so serious as that?"

A little stream of light travelled out under the verandah, and fell over the gravel-walk. The Count had taken the lamp from the inner part of the room, to see his friend clearly by the light of it.

"Yes!" he said. "*Your face speaks the truth this time. Serious, indeed—as serious as the money matters themselves.*"

"More serious. As true as I sit here, more serious!"

The light disappeared again, and the talk went on.

"I showed you the letter to my wife that Anne Catherick hid in the sand," Sir Percival continued. "There's no boasting in that letter, Fosco—she *does* know the Secret."

"Say as little as possible, Percival, in my presence, of the Secret. Does she know it from you?"

"No; from her mother."

"Two women in possession of your private mind—bad, bad, bad, my friend! One question here, before we go any farther. The motive of your shutting up the daughter in the asylum, is now plain enough to me—but the manner of her escape is not quite so clear. Do you suspect the people in charge of her of closing their eyes purposely, at the instance of some enemy, who could afford to make it worth their while?"

"No; she was the best-behaved patient they had—and, like fools, they trusted her. She's just mad enough to be shut up, and just sane enough to ruin me when she's at large—if you understand that?"

"I do understand it. Now, Percival, come at once to the point; and then I shall know what to do. Where is the danger of your position at the present moment?"

"Anne Catherick is in this neighbourhood,

and in communication with Lady Glyde—there's the danger, plain enough. Who can read the letter she hid in the sand, and not see that my wife is in possession of the secret, deny it as she may?"

"One moment, Percival. If Lady Glyde does know the secret, she must know also that it is a compromising secret for *you*. As your wife, surely it is her interest to keep it?"

"Is it? I'm coming to that. It might be her interest if she cared two straws about me. But I happen to be an encumbrance in the way of another man. She was in love with him, before she married me—she's in love with him now—an infernal vagabond of a drawing-master, named Hartright."

"My dear friend! what is there extraordinary in that? They are all in love with some other man. Who gets the first of a woman's heart? In all my experience I have never yet met with the man who was Number One. Number Two, sometimes. Number Three, Four, Five, often. Number One, never! He exists, of course—but, I have not met with him."

"Wait! I haven't done yet. Who do you think helped Anne Catherick to get the start, when the people from the madhouse were after her? Hartright. Who do you think saw her again in Cumberland? Hartright. Both times, he spoke to her alone. Stop! don't interrupt me. The scoundrel's as sweet on my wife, as she is on him. He knows the secret, and she knows the secret. Once let them both get together again, and it's her interest and his interest to turn their information against me."

"Gently, Percival—gently! Are you insensible to the virtue of Lady Glyde?"

"That for the virtue of Lady Glyde! I believe in nothing about her but her money. Don't you see how the case stands? She might be harmless enough by herself; but if she and that vagabond Hartright—"

"Yes, yes, I see. Where is Mr. Hartright?"

"Out of the country. If he means to keep a whole skin on his bones, I recommend him not to come back in a hurry."

"Are you sure he is out of the country?"

"Certain. I had him watched from the time he left Cumberland to the time he sailed. Oh, I've been careful, I can tell you! Anne Catherick lived with some people at a farm-house near Limmeridge. I went there, myself, after she had given me the slip, and made sure that they knew nothing. I gave her mother a form of letter to write to Miss Halcombe, exonerating me from any bad motive in putting her under restraint. I've spent, I'm afraid to say how much, in trying to trace her. And, in spite of it all, she turns up here, and escapes me on my own property! How do I know who else may see her, who else may speak to her? That prying scoundrel, Hartright, may come back without my knowing it, and may make use of her to-morrow—"

"Not he, Percival! While I am on the spot, and while that woman is in the neighbourhood,

I will answer for our laying hands on her, before Mr. Hartright—even if he does come back. I see! yes, yes, I see! The finding of Anne Catherick is the first necessity: make your mind easy about the rest. Your wife is here, under your thumb; Miss Halcombe is inseparable from her, and is, therefore, under your thumb also; and Mr. Hartright is out of the country. This invisible Anne of yours, is all we have to think of for the present. You have made your inquiries?"

"Yes. I have been to her mother; I have ransacked the village—and all to no purpose."

"Is her mother to be depended on?"

"Yes."

"She has told your secret once."

"She won't tell it again."

"Why not? Are her own interests concerned in keeping it, as well as yours?"

"Yes—deeply concerned."

"I am glad to hear it, Percival, for your sake. Don't be discouraged, my friend. Our money matters, as I told you, leave me plenty of time to turn round in; and I may search for Anne Catherick to-morrow to better purpose than you. One last question, before we go to bed."

"What is it?"

"It is this. When I went to the boat-house to tell Lady Glyde that the little difficulty of her signature was put off, accident took me there in time to see a strange woman parting in a very suspicious manner from your wife. But accident did not bring me near enough to see this same woman's face plainly. I must know how to recognise our invisible Anne. What is she like?"

"Like? Come! I'll tell you in two words. She's a sickly likeness of my wife."

The chair creaked, and the pillar shook once more. The Count was on his feet again—this time in astonishment.

"What!!!" he exclaimed, eagerly.

"Fancy my wife, after a bad illness, with a touch of something wrong in her head—and there is Anne Catherick for you," answered Sir Percival.

"Are they related to each other?"

"Not a bit of it."

"And yet, so like?"

"Yes, so like. What are you laughing about?"

There was no answer, and no sound of any kind. The Count was laughing in his smooth, silent, internal way.

"What are you laughing about?" reiterated Sir Percival.

"Perhaps, at my own fancies, my good friend. Allow me my Italian humour—do I not come of the illustrious nation which invented the exhibition of Punch? Well, well, well, I shall know Anne Catherick when I see her—and so enough for to-night. Make your mind easy, Percival. Sleep, my son, the sleep of the just; and see what I will do for you, when daylight comes to help us both. I have my projects and my plans, here in my big head. You shall pay

those bills and find Anne Catherick—my sacred word of honour on it, but you shall! Am I a friend to be treasured in the best corner of your heart, or am I not? Am I worth those loans of money which you so delicately reminded me of a little while since? Whatever you do, never wound me in my sentiments any more. Recognise them, Percival! imitate them! I forgive you again; I shake hands again. Good night!"

Not another word was spoken. I heard the Count close the library door. I heard Sir Percival barring up the window-shutters. It had been raining, raining all the time. I was cramped by my position, and chilled to the bones. When I first tried to move, the effort was so painful to me, that I was obliged to desist. I tried a second time, and succeeded in rising to my knees on the wet roof.

As I crept to the wall, and raised myself against it, I looked back, and saw the window of the Count's dressing-room gleam into light. My sinking courage flickered up in me again, and kept my eyes fixed on his window, as I stole my way, step by step, back, along the wall of the house.

The clock struck the quarter-past one, when I laid my hands on the window-sill of my own room. I had seen nothing and heard nothing which could lead me to suppose that my retreat had been discovered.

#### BEYOND GOOD HOPE.

On the south-eastern coast of Africa, about eight hundred miles from the Cape of Good Hope, is Vasco de Gama's "Land of the Nativity;" that green, mild, tempting land which he and his discovered on the twenty-fifth of December, fourteen hundred and ninety-seven; just ten years after Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Stormy Cape, known since as "of Good Hope." Vasco de Gama called the land Terra Natalis, in honour of the day of its discovery; also Terra de Fumo, because of the dense clouds of smoke perpetually hanging over the table-lands, from the burning of the coarse Ixia grass growing there. It is the Land of Smoke to the present day, and from the same cause; much to the discomfort of astronomers and star-gazers, who might as well attempt to make observations through the atmosphere of a London fog, as through the smoke-clouds which for ever darken the brilliancy of those summer skies.

The Land of the Nativity, or Natal, as we English call it, is in a chaotic geological condition. The ground has been so upheaved and split open, so jammed together and sundered, that no one can say what lies uppermost and what beneath, or judge, from position, of priority of formation. Granite and gneiss, slate, trap, and sandstone are tumbled together, as if they had been flung down anyhow out of a Titan's hod, and left to lie where they fell; everywhere are evidences of convulsion and wreck, and of new conditions created on the ruin of the old. The great peculiarity, though, of the

country, and, indeed, of all Southern Africa, is the succession of terraces, or broad table-lands, rising far above the level of the plains. The base of these table mountains is composed of green, accessible slopes, with rugged granite buttresses breaking through; suddenly, from these slopes, springs up a perpendicular wall of reddish-grey rock, and on the top, "a wide expanse of level pasture, often many square miles in extent, which thus presents the curious spectacle of a large tract of land, isolated from the rest of the world by a circumvallation of downward-dipping precipices, with perhaps only one or two narrow rocky staircases, by which the heights above can be scaled." It is not easy walking on these table-lands even after you have toiled up the steep serpentine staircases. You push your way through the thick high grass, and come to perhaps a gentle slope: half a dozen steps more bring you to a precipice striking sheer under your feet, where another footfall would be your destruction. The country is rich in rivers and waterfalls, which tumble and riot among the grey granite rocks, neither "blessed for their beauty nor made to turn a mill," according to Fox's recipe; and almost all have pretty sentimental kind of names. There is the Startling River, the Great, and the Buffalo, of course; these are absolute with all savages; the Stone, the Beautiful, the Standing, the Glare, the Soft, the Whey, and the River of the Entrance; while one mountain range is the Spying-top Hills, and a certain county is Weenen (Weeping); in commemoration of a frightful massacre by the Zulus, in 1836, of all the Dutch settlers found there—women and children as well as men.

A crew of eighty shipwrecked men, in 1683, were the first English visitors to Natal, but no attempt was made at colonisation or possession until 1823, when Lieutenant Farewell got together a little band of twenty, and established relations and a certain kind of trade with King Chaka and his tribe; he and his successors managing so well, and laying such good foundations, that, in 1856, Natal was considered of sufficient importance to be recognised as a chartered British colony, with governor and legislative paraphernalia all complete. That Zulu king, Chaka, was a man of remarkable genius; of the Napoleonic and royal bandit order: one of those initiative, original, creative men who are absolutely needed to found a nation. Chaka created the Zulu nation out of a mere handful of warlike men, "ate up" all the clans and tribes lying round, established his throne on the points of his warriors' assegais, and lived and ruled by his army alone. But Chaka's doom came in the old way. His brother Dingaan murdered him as he sat comfortably in his tent. Dingaan proved a tyrant, of course. He had a younger brother, one Panda, living in exile on the Natal side of the Tugela, or Startling River. Panda, exiled from the court, and with only a scanty following of his own, made overtures to the white men, who, befriended by Chaka, had been renounced and persecuted by

Dingaan, and now held but a slippery footing in the country. At first he was suspected of being an underhand emissary of Dingaan, and coldly dealt with; but when he proved his sincerity by gathering an army of four thousand foot, the Dutch gave him credence and four hundred horse, under the command of Pretorius. The result was, that the allied forces fought with and defeated the king, and that Panda was placed on the throne in his stead. This was in 1838.

Things went on briskly enough for about eighteen years, when, in 1856, Panda's eldest two sons quarrelled with their father and each other; though, to be sure, they merely represented the discontents of the nation at large, and gave the discontented a visible head and rallying-point. Panda had grown enormously fat, and lived secluded from his people; thus hearing none of their complaints; he kept his army, too, without food or pay, and, what was worse, kept them too long enlisted, consequently unwieldy. After various skirmishes between Ketchwago and Umbulazi, the sons, there was a regular pitched battle, when the elder brother was successful, and thenceforth assumed the management of affairs. It was decided that Panda was too old and too fat to move, and that he must therefore only think; that he was the head, while Ketchwago would be the feet, of the empire; and the government has gone on ever since in this Japanese, duplex manner. These arrangements were made tacitly, and more by dumb-show and unspoken acts than by words, as it is "high treason in Zululand to recognise in words even the possibility of such an occurrence as the death of the king." Once a missionary, going up to the court, electrified both it and the king with horror, by complimenting him on his good looks, as he had heard a report "that he was dead." Panda was for an instant struck dumb with alarm and terror, but, recovering himself, said in a low voice, hastily, "We never speak of such things here," and changed the conversation.

The Kafirs about Natal seem to be of two races—a mixture, it is supposed, of the Arab and the negro; some having the thick lips, protruding jaw, and broad flat nose of the negro, while others show the aquiline nose, straight lip, and prominent square forehead of the Caucasian; both have woolly hair, soft dark eyes, and delicately moulded limbs, small-boned, slim, and taper. They seem to have come originally, along the eastern coast from the north, and they yet retain certain words and ceremonies essentially Arab; while, on the other hand, the term "Kafir" among the Arabs means literally an unbeliever in Mahomet. Half naked in dress, the Kafir is rich in arms. He wears simply a bunch of skin strips fore and aft, brass bracelets, necklaces of roots, or of wild beasts' teeth and claws; and makes pockets or shelves of the holes in his ears, where he sticks his snuff-box of reeds and other little personalia. With these adjuncts he is in court costume, dressed to the utmost of his wardrobe. But to make up for his paucity of clothing he has his buckler of ox-skin, his



quiver of assegais, and his huge knobbed club, if he stirs so much as a yard or two from his hut; "for war, he has plumed and furred robes of considerable complexity." His wealth consists in his cows and his wives; and his ripe manhood, or rather his ownership of huts and wives, is indicated by shaving all his head except a narrow track round the crown, which he works up with gum into a black polished coronet or ring, and in which he places his feathers and other ornaments. Until he is married and independent, he wears his hair long and fuzzy, dressed in all manner of ways, and the chief's permission is necessary before it can be shaved and wrought into that ebony coronal. The married women wrap a small bit of skin about their waists, and indicate their rank by its greater or less length towards the feet. They wear bead necklaces and brass bracelets, and, like the men, shave their heads bare, but instead of a coronal keep a tuft on the crown, which they make fiery red with scarlet dust. The young girls wear only a narrow waist fringe and a necklace of gay beads, and the young children are destitute of everything but what Nature gave them until they are seven years old. The Kafirs are something like the North American Indians in their division of labour, but not quite so "brave." The men hunt, make war, build the huts, hew the timber, and milk the cows; the women dig and hoe, sow and reap, prepare the food, and repair the dwellings, which, however, are only huge beehives with a fire in the centre, and a continuous hedge all round. The Kafir has no family name, but is provided with one, according to some accidental circumstance, at his birth; this name he afterwards changes for one recording a deed of bravery or a personal characteristic. Thus "The boy who was born in a hole" may become "The hunter who caused the game to roll over;" and "The child born when the sun shone" may be "The man with the big beard," or "The man with the broad face." Europeans are also rechristened in the Kafir manner. A lady, who walked with a brisk and staccato step, was "One who moves in little cracks," or, literally, "Cracklegait;" and a clergyman's daughter, who had the habit of looking quickly from side to side, was "One who looks out in all directions in order to see." Of course the Kafir is superstitious. Is not the essence of savage life its fear? And, being superstitious, every passing event is matter of good or evil omen. It is a bad omen when a rock-rabbit runs into a kraal, or a dog gets on the top of a hut, or when a turkey-buzzard is caught in a snare; but worse than all their omens is the dreadful power of the Abatakati, or evil-doers; or, as some translate the word, witches and wizards. Under the direction of the resuscitating evil-doer, the Umkovu (Dead Spirit) is sent at night into some kraal, where it shouts, "Maya!"—"Woe! woe! to the house of my father." That maya is the death-omen of some one; and when the natives hear it pealing at midnight through their kraal, they remain silent and motionless: believing that they

would be struck dead if they were to speak or stir from their beds. So the evil-doer and his goblin messenger work their wicked will without fear of interruption, and make too surely that spectre cry the doom of whomsoever may have offended. The whole transaction is a savage parody on the Vehmgericht and Santa Hermandad of the middle ages.

When a Kafir approaches the king's palace, he begins, at the distance of half a mile, to shout aloud in honour of the royal name, assuring the sovereign that he is the great king, a black man, a leopard, a tiger, an elephant, and a calf of that cow which gores all other beasts with its sharp horns; when within the royal precincts, he advances with a bent body, repeating the royal salute "Bayeti!" though what bayeti means, Dr. MANN, whose charming book on Natal we are quoting, does not tell us. But it must mean something very humble, used, as it is, by one being to another who has absolute power of life and death over him. Gay, light-hearted, affectionate, easily content, social, and hospitable, the Kafir, in his natural condition, has no cares, and few wants; but when long under the influence of white men, he becomes morose and sulky, and makes rapid strides in the vices of greed and covetousness. As yet, though, he is honest, and articles of the most tempting value may be freely left about the tent or hut; however numerous the visitors, there will be no unlawful "lifting." Their hospitality, though still unbounded among each other, is changing towards the white men. The traders are accustoming them to take payment; and now a Kafir will come after a few days to a visitor whom he has lodged, and say, "I gave to you when you came to my hut, because you are a great chief, and now I am come to you, and what will you give me?" Not long ago, eight strong young men out on a journey went to the house of one of the missionaries near D'Urban, saying they were hungry and wanted food, but as they had no money they would work for two hours for the chief "to earn their entertainment;" which was utterly unlike the primitive Kafir. They are very kind-hearted and sympathetic, exceedingly polite, grateful also, and never backward in returning kindnesses. An old German at New Germany, poor and without influence, but full of gentleness and kindness towards the natives, has been dubbed "a chief" by them, simply on these moral grounds; and one day a Kafir, who had long left his service, went to his house, and laid two small packets on the table before him. "There, old Baas" (master), he said, "are some tea and coffee which I bought for you at Pine Town, because I know you like them." Again, an English hunter, laid up by fever in a solitary hut in Zululand, had his life saved by his Kafir servant, who stole out at night for him, and milked the cows in a neighbouring kraal, though he knew that if he had been caught he would have been killed without mercy. Mr. Posselt was once riding in a remote part of the country, when a woman rushed out of her hut, and called to him to stop; she ran up to him with

her hands full of sugar-cane and mealies, saying, "Take these, for you are the man who gave me bread in your palace three years ago." Another strange woman went to the bishop's station in great distress. She had borrowed a pick of her neighbour and broken it, and did not know how to replace it. The bishop's manager gave her a new pick, and four months after she appeared again, with a bundle of green mealies, and laid them at his feet: "You are my inkosi-chief—you gave me a pick;" for which the mealies were her thanks put into deeds.

But the Kafirs are not all shining bright with good and gold; they have some dark spots, full of rust and rottenness, like the rest of us. They own of themselves (so far understanding the endless antagonism that goes on in the human mind) that they have "an angry heart," and "a peaceful heart," and that the ugovane, the angry or bad heart, said so and so, but the unembeza, the peaceful heart, said so and so. Against all the good which has been told of them, must now be balanced the evil: the laziness, lying, greediness, stinginess, pride, and cruelty to animals, which are their worst faults.

When a Kafir goes out as a domestic servant, he has much to learn and much to forego; and on their sides the master and mistress have much to forbear and excuse. Indeed, an Englishwoman, fresh from the smart footmen and tidy housemaids of the old country, must be almost scared at the sight of a half-naked black man (with only a loose shirt that does not cover half his legs) wandering familiarly about the house, and doing all sorts of domestic jobs not usually given to men to do, yet often hopelessly ignorant and not knowing his right hand from his left. But with kindness, firmness, and consideration, the poor fellow makes a tolerable help in time, and may be depended on for all that he has really learnt. He has to be looked after, though, in matters of cleanliness and personal habits. "In his native state of dignified leisure" he bathes every morning, and indulges plentifully in rude cosmetics, both for his body and his ebon head-ring, but in service he has to be watched and admonished. Only the men hire themselves out: the women are too valuable in their own kraals to be spared for stranger uses; but the men do all kinds of household work with willingness, if not with zeal or industry. They carry heavy burdens—as post-bags and good-sized bales—convey money through lonely parts and never lose or misplace a halfpenny; and the youths and boys make the most careful and tender nurses imaginable. They may often be seen sitting in the verandah, feeding a little fair Anglo-Saxon baby with pap, as cleverly as any old nurse in England would have done. They can be taught to iron, after some trouble, and one Kafir was caught ironing the flounces of his mistress's dress, when at every shake he gave the voluminous folds he looked curiously at them and uttered the national "Wow!" which means everything possible to human speech.

But this half-tamed, half-taught servant soon gets restless, and rushes off to his kraal for a

spell of native enjoyment. One night he may have gone to bed as usual, coiled up anywhere on his skin, with his head on a log for a pillow; the next morning he is off to his cows and his wives, rich in the white man's silver pennies, to earn which he has given up part of his very life. Generally he will return after a time—almost always if he has been treated kindly, and if his master is a well-dressed gentleman who does nothing menial, is gentle in manner, and liberal in dealing, who neither oppresses him nor is familiar, but is every inch the inkosi, or lord; he will seldom return if he has had a brutal or a familiar master, who has not respected himself, and therefore has not earned his servant's respect. Such a master is only an inju, or dog. For, every one is either lord or dog with the Kafir; and, while he honours the one as his chief, he ridicules the other unmercifully, and manages to hit on a contemptuous yet descriptive epithet for him.

Natal lies just outside the tropical zone, where the palms disappear and evergreens are plentiful, where the days are nearly equal in length and the seasons in intensity, where, in the midst of winter, come backward gleams of summer with green leaves and brilliant flowers; and where, often in the summer-time, fall shreds and patches of the severest winter weather. In fact, the seasons, like the ground, are broken up and jumbled together, and different growths crop out in all unexpected ways, and puzzle every one to know how to class them. The longest day is only fourteen hours, the shortest ten; while ours is sixteen and a half for the longest, and seven and a half for the other. The winter in Natal begins in April and ends in September, with an average temperature of sixty-nine degrees; but sometimes the thermometer ranges as high as ninety degrees. The average highest temperature for the three coldest months is 69.3 degrees; the average lowest, at night, 47.7 degrees. In summer there are tremendous storms, with the most brilliant lightning, strangely varied both in shape and in colour. Sometimes, like ribands of light, quivering against the dark grey sky; sometimes, broad flashes of flame, they blaze upward, spreading wider and fiercer as they go; sometimes, there is a radiating star of flame; sometimes, a garland or wreath circling the heavens; and all of the most exquisite and gorgeous colours—amethyst, ruby, turquoise, and sapphire, burning fiery red and palest rose, pearly white, and dead dull leaden grey. Lightning in Natal is in itself worth a journey to the colony, for nothing more beautiful of that kind is to be found under heaven.

Natal has a sirocco. For eight or ten hours at a time, and sometimes for eighteen, comes a hot wind from the north-west, which dries up the skin, cracks the ground into deep fissures, warps and splits wood, and does every kind of damage incidental to siroccos in their worst moods. And hailstorms rage in the summer months, with stones as big as pigeon's eggs, occasionally diversified by angular lumps, too

large to be put into an ordinary drinking glass. Those hailstorms do a world of damage, and mow down crops and fruit, like a scythe. Floods create devastations to a large amount. During one storm, the Umgeni—the River of the Entrance—rose twenty-eight feet above its level, swept over a large sugar plantation, burst across the sand flat on which D'Urban is built, and forced a passage to the inner bay. Another river rose thirty feet, and two hundred oxen were found drowned along the sea-coast within the space of ten miles. But, these are only occasional outbursts. As a rule, the climate is satisfactory. Mild, dry, genial, it is of essential service in all scrofulous and consumptive complaints; and many a man seemingly doomed in England, has become sound in wind and limb, in Natal. Diseases of the digestive organs are more frequent, and people often destroy themselves by too much exercise in mid-day.

There are various climates in the colony, and the coast line and uplands differ from each other as much as England and Madeira differ, or perhaps more. Along the seaboard there is a strip of twelve or fifteen miles in breadth, where the climate and the products are almost tropical. Stiff spiny euphorbias and club-like cactuses stand among native palms, and bananas with mammoth leaves and golden fruit; while purple and pink convolvuluses clothe them in strange fantastic garments, and monkey ropes—the slim stems of climbing mimosas—wave idly in the air from branch to branch. The ground is carpeted with some of our richest hothouse plants; and in farms and gardens may be seen large tracts of sugar-canes, fields of the white-flowered cotton-plant with its purple eye, patches of arrowroot, sweet potatoes, ground nuts (for oil), coffee-trees, papaw-trees, mangoes, lemon-trees, ginger, and cinnamon laurels, with beds of tufted pine-apples—that crowned king of fruits. For industrial purposes this tropical belt is invaluable. The emigrant who has a love for the kind of climate and production may make his fortune there, either as a cotton, a sugar, or a coffee planter; and that, it is said, without much outlay. On the uplands are the English farm-lands, where cows, sheep, and horses, are bred to perfection; where grain ripens well; and where the better kinds of European fruit flourish admirably—at least if peaches, figs, granadillas, apples, pears, quinces, almonds, and grapes, be the better kinds, and to be cherished with care. In the midlands, come the dairy farms, very productive, but not yet thoroughly well worked; fields of mealies, or Indian corn; patches of buck-wheat, bearded-wheat, and rye; plenty of good timber; with lemons and guavas, pomegranates, peaches, oranges, bananas, figs, quinces, bamboos, and loquats, in all the gardens; and the rose, as a hedge, blossoming all the year round.

Natal is a good place for the emigrant who is not afraid of work, and for the emigrant's wife who is clever and capable—not a fine lady. Many a man who landed penniless, is now the owner of farms and trek (draught) oxen; and others, who went out as servants, are now masters in their

turn, with servants under them. One day-labourer, from the Eastern Counties, went out with a gentleman, whom he left after two years' service in Natal. His former employer in England, hearing of this, sent him a message, saying that he would be glad to have him back, and would give him constant employment if he would return. The man's answer was, "Tell my master if he will come out here to me, I will make him a free gift of five hundred acres of land, all for himself."

Dr. Mann closes his valuable and delightful work with a few hints to emigrants and their wives. He advises them to take out only money, and nothing to sell, as they would probably either overstock, or mistake the taste of, the market; he advises them to take no furniture, save, perhaps, an iron bedstead or so; not too many clothes, but pieces of calico, chintz, holland, &c.; plenty of strong, stout, serviceable boots and shoes. Also, to supply themselves with a good stock of simple domestic medicines; and, above all, to carry with them stout arms and a brave heart, ready hands, good temper, courage, industry, and perseverance. With these, according to Dr. Mann, any one may make his fortune in Natal, live like a gentleman, and leave a fine property to his children.

#### LAKE AND WATERFALL.

THE steep and rugged cliffs,  
The lake, the dark wood sighing,  
Like deep reflection seem,  
Profound and calmly lying.  
And there, with thundering roar,  
Between the rocks wild gushing  
Like to the hardy act,  
The waterfall is rushing.  
Thou shouldst, like yonder lake,  
Reflecting, stay—deep thinking,  
Then boldly, like the stream,  
Rush on to act—unshrinking.

#### OUR SQUARE.

THIS is a pretty square of ours, bright, white, and new, full of porticos and columns; quite aristocratic in appearance; I may say imposing. It is one of those squares which impress you with a sense of respectability at the first glance, and I am too old a woman of the world, my dears, not to know the value of first impressions. We, the inhabitants, are charmed with our lot; and I shrewdly suspect that not many of us have ever lived in so much grandeur before. My dears, if you wish people to think well of your social condition, gently pool-pool your present state in favour of your past. It has a grand appearance, as of fallen greatness or concealed strength; and people sympathise and are awed by it. Yet, we are certainly very well off here, and I for one own, that I like the porticos and the columns, the twisted iron railings, ornamented architraves, plaster baskets, and all the outward signs and symbols of splendour, which it has pleased the architect and our landlord to give us. They look so well!

We have a few drawbacks; yes, that cannot be denied. We are damp and draughty, and I doubt the drains, and question the healthiness of the soil; but one must have something, you know; and a grand outside does compensate one for many out-of-sight annoyances. The greatest annoyance to me, however, is the children. We are overrun with children. Surely we are a rabbit warren in process of transformation; for every house, excepting my own and one or two others, teems with little folks, from the apoplectic baby in fluffy white legs to the ungainly schoolboy with arms too long for his sleeves, and ankles far below his trousers.

In spite of our grandeur of appearance, we have strange people among us in our square; and I, an unmarried lady of a certain age—the granddaughter of a dean, and with an ancestral bishop hanging up in the dining-room, I, with aristocratic traditions floating through my family, and claiming a profound acquaintance with the best of breeding, I ought to be held a pretty good judge of the quality of my associates; and I say that some of us are equivocal enough. I will tell you, my dears, what we are all like, and then you can judge for yourselves. Here, draw your chairs a little nearer; it is so vulgar to have to speak loud.

I will begin with myself, as I am entitled to do. I am a single lady of a certain age, as I said; of good family, and of sufficient, but by no means extravagant income. I was called handsome in my time; but that was long ago, for I am not ashamed to confess my age. Why should I be ashamed to say that I am fifty-five? I am strong and active, and have excellent health; and why should I desire the reputation of greater youth? Do you think I covet the admiration of men? I had enough of it in my time, perhaps; but that is no matter. I trust I am too wise now for follies of this sort, my dears. I leave them to young simpletons like yourselves, who believe that candles are stars, and go on fluttering and fluttering till you singe yourselves to rags, and die, suffocated in a dirty bath of boiling tallow. And that you call falling in love.

I have nothing to complain of in my life; the servants, and the tradespeople, and those dreadful children in the square, and the undesirable people one meets with there on a summer's evening, are about the whole of my miseries. But I am a pretty fair match for my servants, and do not let them cheat me very much; and as for the tradespeople, I generally go to market myself, every day, and I should not like to be in the place of the man who attempted to deal me out light weights. I know they call me mean, but I say that right is right, and being robbed forms no part of right. At all events, I have the best of the argument, my dears, for I keep my money, and remember the proverb about laughing and winning. Perhaps I have said enough now for you to understand what I am like—an unmarried lady with two maids, three dogs, a parrot, a pair of Java sparrows, two amadavats, and an Angora cat; a little sharp in temper at

times, and not easily taken in; very strict in morals, and with an unspeakable loathing for all your flirting, dressy misses in their balloons and impudent little hats, who strut up and down the square with their short red petticoats stuck out like opera dancers' skirts, and their flaunty gowns looped up in D'Aulnoy festoons over them. But I am a lady; and that is not what every one can say of herself.

I am not fortunate in my immediate neighbours. Opposite I have a family who worry my life out by their finery and vulgarity. The mother and her three daughters—ranging from the ages of twelve to eighteen—are for ever parading the square with their hideous crinolines and little pert hats with streaming feathers, looking singularly unlike rational women of wholesome domestic life. The mother decks herself like a parrot in all colours, and sticks a plume on the top of her bonnet, like a cockatoo's crest. I have seen the milkman's dirty little children gaping after them as after so many May-day queens. The man—I will not call him gentleman—is a soap-boiler, and overflowing with fat and money. They are odious people altogether, vulgarly fashionable—don't you know?—insolently wealthy. They are always visiting, or with company at home; and, in the summer evenings, they come and sit out on the balcony like a crowd of butterflies, in all sorts of incongruous colours, laughing so that the whole square can hear them. Now, is not this distracting, my dears, and have I not the right to complain? To be sure, people do say that they are good-natured; but vulgar people always are good-natured. It is only your high blood that has nerves and sensibilities; and, indeed, whenever I hear of any one being remarkably amiable, I set him down as of necessity a vulgarian without redemption. My soap-boilers bear out my theory. They are notoriously frank and hospitable, give largely to charities, and spoil their servants in the most disgusting manner; besides, harbouring quite a nest of beggars at all times round their door. But would they dress as they do, would they laugh as they do, and troop about in such ostentatious jollity, if they were not the vulgarest of the vulgar? And do you think that a few pence given here and there, or a little stupid good nature can atone for such a fault as this? No, my dears, and no lady could think otherwise. We must stand by our order, and not suffer ourselves to be betrayed into accepting anything lower, because it is good-natured. Remember that!

Next door to these dreadful people live others just as dreadful; indeed more so, if that were possible: my only consolation in the whole affair being that none of these horrors live on my side of the way. My own immediate neighbours, thank goodness, are respectable enough, if disagreeable, and would scorn any likeness to the creatures I have mentioned. And when you have taken a house, young ladies, you, too, will find that there is something in having decent and proper people for your side neighbours. There is a feeling of contamination from the misdeeds



of "next-door," which no opposite degradation can give. Well, as I said, side by side with the prosperous red-faced soap-boiler, lives another tradesman, retired, and in evil circumstances. The man, they say—you know one hears everything in a small place like this—is over head and ears in debt, yet lives well, spares no expense, and flourishes about on Sundays as fine as chains, and broadcloth, and two-horsed broughams can make him. In short, he is the scandal and the spectacle of the whole neighbourhood. As I sit a good deal at the window, and they immediately face me, I see the whole drama pass, in uninterrupted scenes and acts, before me; and a very sad and disgraceful drama it is, one which I think could be prevented by law. What business have such people in such a square as ours? The impudence and presumption of the man! Sometimes things go hard with our debtor, and then as many precautions are taken as if the house was besieged by an enemy. The dustman climbs over the area railings for his dust-heap, for not a cranny is left open that a mouse might creep through with a writ in its paws; the butcher-boy delivers his legs and his loins, and the laundress hoists up her bundles by the same way; and the dirty servant-girl is kept perpetually running up and down those dirty stone steps, carrying messages from the duns to the master, and from the master back again to the duns. When people grow very importunate, and stamp and rave, as they do sometimes, and will not be put off with the servant, the wife, who seems to have all the disagreeable work to do, flings up the dining-room window, and holds a parley; but no one ever gets any satisfaction, so far as I can see, though somehow they all disperse at last. Very often, quite a crowd of duns are hanging about the house at once; and it is curious, though very shocking, to watch their different ways and manners. Some are humble and beseeching—and these, for the most part, are careworn women in limp gowns and faded shawls, or men with the seams of their coats worn threadbare, and their hats battered and forlorn; others, generally well-dressed, substantial-looking people, get violent, and do a great deal of gesticulation—these are the people to whom the wife is sent, as evidently needing management and propitiation. Others, again, look downcast and sullen, and will not take an answer, but linger about the steps in a kind of brutish desperation, as if they expected the very stones to relent, and turn themselves up in golden sovereigns to pay their bills. Yet even these men I have seen mollified and got rid of by a timely glass of something, handed over the area railings. Then strange-looking men come lounging at the corners of the square; men with blue or red neckerchiefs tied in an odd way, and who look anything but respectable in such a place as ours. These, they tell me, are sheriff's officers, waiting for our retired tradesman in difficulties, and ready to pounce upon him if he so much as shows the crown of his sleek bald head outside the door. But he gives them no chance.

Whoever is admitted into the house is admitted by himself alone. He carefully reconnoitres the enemy through the stencilled glass panels of his hall door, and if unwelcome or unknown, tumbles back into the darkness, like a pantomime clown. If safe, he opens just a foot wide of the door, and the visitor rushes in, as into a trap, and then a bang, which echoes through the whole square, announces that my gentleman has outwitted the Queen's Bench for the thousandth time. In the summer, on Sunday mornings, before the carriage and its two white horses dash up to the door, and while the luxurious breakfast is preparing, he rushes out into the street, with his crimson-lined dressing-gown streaming behind him, and his little girls running about without their hats or cloaks. I have spoken seriously to the landlord about this disgraceful exhibition, but he only laughs. I have no patience with these men! They cling together like barnacles, or mussels, or anything else unpleasant, and uphold each other in everything.

On the other side of the soap-boiler lives a person of whom I can scarcely bring myself to speak, my dears; and, indeed, perhaps I had better pass her over in silence altogether. She is the ugliest feature of our whole square, yet she is a very fine-looking woman, very gay, and, some say, handsome. I confess I do not think so myself. She wants distinction of appearance, and distinction goes further with me than mere vulgar beauty. She is an odious creature, my dears, and a key of the gardens should not have been allowed her. I always make a point of leaving them the instant she enters, and so do all my friends; but she never takes the hint, though I scowl at her dreadfully, but she sweeps up and down the broad walks, with her shawl trailing on the ground, and her wide skirts brushing the flower-beds, and is generally accompanied by one or two gentlemen—the creature!—though I believe her wicked story of her husband in India, and the rest of it, is all false.

Then we have an artist's family: upon my word, one of the most annoying of all. Strange, outré, eccentric people are they—not exactly vulgar, but so extraordinary! The man wears a black velvet coat, broad leaved hat with peaked crown, and is almost smothered in a huge brown beard and moustache, with which it pleases him to conceal his native ugliness. For I contend that he must be ugly: every man must be ugly who disguises himself in this manner. No one who was even tolerably well-looking would consent to wear a mask which put him on a level with the most repulsive-looking individual in the kingdom. There, my dears, I never knew a man able to answer that argument! The wife is a tall, finely proportioned woman, who dresses like an old-fashioned picture. The other day she came out into the square in a Katherine and Petruccio gown, with slashed sleeves tight to her wrist, small hat and feather, ruffled throat, and without a shred of crinoline. Now I do not like the soap-boilers' crinoline, but the lanky grace of Mistress Gum and Gamboge was too much! Of course every one stared at her;

but she did not seem to mind that. I suppose she thought herself handsome, and marched about the gardens looking more like an actress than a West-end lady. She dresses her children, too, like pictures, without reference to chronology. A few of the younger—they are legion—wear what these foolish people call the Gainsborough hair, cut straight over the forehead, and hanging down in stupid curls upon the shoulders; and all have long, wild elf-locks that I long to clip into decency. The other day the youngest child, a creature just able to walk, was brought out dressed like a King Charles Cavalier. Conceive the folly! It looked like a dancing-dog or a monkey at a fair, in its little blue velvet cape, which didn't cover it—how could it when it was half off?—trunk hose, ruffled white boots, and feathered hat looped up with what I suppose was the drop of madame's pearl earring. The creature's hair was long and curled; and in this guise the unfortunate monkey paraded up and down the square, with two little sisters in festooned petticoats and smart hats, all on one side, like the D'Aulnoy shepherdesses again. Had the idiots been giving a fancy ball, I wonder? But if they had, what a shame to make these little helpless creatures so ridiculous! The eldest girl is about fifteen, and a pretty, well-mannered girl enough. She had been something of a favourite with me, from the graceful way in which, one day, she ran after me with my handkerchief, that I had dropped on the grass. She seemed to me as if she might have been made a superior kind of person; and her fresh face, with its frank smile, quite impressed me. Yes, I had liked the child, and would have been kind to her; I intended to be so, but yesterday, as I tell you, there was the mother as Katherine and Petruchio, the two little girls all in flowers and chintz, like China shepherdesses, the baby a King Charles, and Miss Rosa was Dolly Vardon. Add to this assemblage of vile taste the man in his velvet coat and Hungarian hat, smoking a cigar, and I put it to the collective sense of you all, was this the kind of thing to be encouraged?

Further up is a mysterious house. I have not been able to penetrate even the outside crust of the story or tragedy which hangs over it. All I know is, that something dreadful is going on there, but what, I cannot make out. The people keep only one servant, dress shabbily, never open the drawing-room shutters, and seem to me to live in the kitchen. They have one child who looks seared and half starved, and whom I see them snatch away with quite brutality of manner, if she is looking out of the window, or running up the street too far in front of them. The woman is a pale, weary, desolate-looking creature, with an eternal cold in her head; the man, a surly, shabby wretch, who might be a forger, or a coiner, or a political spy, or a murderer, or perhaps all of them together, and something more. He is out a good deal, leaving early and returning late; but his wife seldom goes from home. The servant is a young slipshod girl, and has the same seared look as

the child; and she is never suffered to go out alone. She seems to me to be a prisoner, and not over well treated either. What can they have taken the house for? They do not occupy one half of it; they do not look as if they could pay the rent; and they are evidently of quite a different class and order to anything which we should consider fitting to such a neighbourhood. What are the sobs and moans we hear at night? I have opened my window in summer on purpose to listen, and have heard the weeping quite plainly across the square. What is the mystery? for, sure as I am here, there is a terrible mystery somewhere—perhaps a crime—and one never knows, in London, what may be going on among one's next door neighbours. At all events, these people have, evidently, no business in such a place as this, and I wish that they would go; for I expect that some day we shall see "Our Square" figuring in the Police Reports.

These are the only out-of-the-way people that we have: and I think they are enough. For the rest, there is a pert lawyer with a very tall hat, who lives two doors from me, and always makes a point of asking after my health; which I take to be an unwarrantable liberty. His house is distressingly neat and clean, and I am sure that his prim little wife does half the work. As for the children, they look as if just stepped out of band-boxes. If they would but laugh and run about like other children—but no, they always look as if afraid of spoiling their new frocks. People never can be moderate in anything—they either let their children run wild, like colts or leopard cubs, or they curb them into tame mice. The lawyer is evidently thriving. He goes down to business in a hideous gig, and his wife walks out with vulgar scrupulousness as to shoes and boots. Still I must repeat, I believe she helps to clean the house, and, indeed, if I must tell the truth, my housemaid told me so, and told me, too, that she was only an innkeeper's daughter, and that they have both risen from nothing. I was sure of it before I knew it. They have pleb stamped on every feature.

Next door to me, and between me and the lawyer, lives an old admiral, blind in one eye, lame, and deaf, and the most passionate, ill-tempered person that ever lived. I can hear him storming and swearing (for the walls are thin), and stamping his wooden leg heavily on the floor, frightening his servants and children, like a tornado broken loose. One day I sent in my compliments on a card, and begged him not to make quite so much noise the next time he found it necessary to rebuke his children. I was not very well that day, and perhaps a little out of temper, but I would do the same thing again. I was standing at the door, waiting for Jane to return, and I heard him say, with such an oath, my dears, quite shocking! that I was a cat; yes, actually an old cat, and the magpie and mischief-maker of the place. As I could not be a cat and a magpie at once, I sent back Jane with a recommendation to the admiral "to study natural history before

he again presumed to send ladies ornithological remarks." Since then the old gentleman has been somewhat quieter, but he frowns or makes some rude grimace when I meet him out in the square gardens; but I have the advantage, for I have kept my temper and he hasn't.

A lady's school; a family church-mad—always at church twice a day during Lent, and once every day besides, while fast days and holidays seem wholly spent in church; for my part, I wonder they don't take blankets and pillows and sleep there—and a pretty fair sprinkling of ordinary, well-conducted people, make up the rest of our square.

Now let us have tea. Ring the bell, Miss Emma—not too loud, else you will rouse the birds. Jane, bring up tea; and don't make it so absurdly strong as you did the last time these young ladies were here.

### THE CARNESECCHI CORNER.

Is the old central part of Florence there is a spot still familiarly known as the "Canto de' Carneseccchi"—the Corner of the Carneseccchi family. There are many instances of localities similarly called in Florence from the well-known names of the old families who once had their palaces there; and though these races may have been long since extinct, it cannot be said that "their place knows them no longer," for the spots so designated are generally to the present day better known to the genuine Florentine by those names, than by the more legitimately recognised title of the streets in which they are situated. In the present instance the Canto de' Carneseccchi serves to commemorate the very ancient and long since extinct family of the Carneseccchi.

A work on Tuscan antiquities, published in 1798, tells us of this ancient race, that it had furnished to the magistracy of the city forty-nine "Priori," or presidents, of whom the first held office in 1297; and eleven "Gonfalonieri," or chief magistrates of the republic, of whom the first served in 1358. The author proceeds to give a long list of other magistracies, honours, and distinctions which had rendered the family illustrious, and then concludes his article as follows: "Especially worthy of memory among the illustrious members of this family is the priest Piero, son of the senator Andrea, the son of Paolo. He, from his youth up, applied himself to learning, and became one of the most celebrated men of letters of his day. Having embraced the ecclesiastical career, he obtained various benefices. He was, besides, apostolic protonotary, as well as governor of Tivoli, and commander of the fortress there. He served Pope Clement the Seventh as first secretary, and had the honour of being treated by him as a familiar friend, and of very frequently sitting at his table. He obtained, in 1533, a canonry in the metropolitan church of Florence; and, when Paul the Third ascended the Papal throne, he was named one of his secretaries. This illustrious ecclesiastical died in 1567."

We have nothing to add to our author's statement of the learning of Carneseccchi, and of the distinction it obtained for him, save that it is corroborated by many writers. His preferment under Clement the Seventh and his intimacy with that pontiff, together with a full and accurate acquaintance with the court of Rome resulting from the office he held in it, may be noticed as remarkable preparations for the sequel of his career. There was nothing surprising at that time in his holding high office under Clement. He was of a noble Florentine family, which had always adhered to the fortunes of the Medici in their various vicissitudes. He was an ecclesiastic, of high reputation for business, talent, and learning. And these qualifications were sufficient to ensure profitable employment at Rome during the pontificate of the Medicean Pope Clement the Seventh. If men did say that Pietro Carneseccchi had some queer and fantastic notions respecting certain matters of religious doctrine, Clement was not the man to let any such trifle stand in the way of his patronising and employing a political adherent, who was also a very clever fellow. The probability is, however, that men said very little about any such matter in those days. Would Lord Palmerston object to make a man attorney-general because he held some special notions on the subject of entomological classification? Was not Clement's very particular crony, counsellor, and banker, Filippo Strozzi, not only a notorious free-thinker, if not an utter unbeliever, but such an open and habitual scoffer, that he could not restrain his wicked wit even at the table of the Pope himself, so that Clement had to look another way, and cry "Fie! fie!" while he laughed in his beard? It is true, this tolerant and easy-going pope starved to death in a horrible dungeon in Castle St. Angelo, the wretched friar Benedetto da Foiano for certain unorthodox preachings: he himself, the pope, finding time amid the cares of state to give daily orders for the gradual diminution of the miserable man's pittance of bread-and-water, till he died at the end of prolonged agonies, such as no less scientifically imagined mode of taking away life could have produced. But then the friar of Foiano had preached republicanism to the Florentines, and this was a heresy that Clement the Seventh could not stand. As for the rest, those were the days when elegantly erudite cardinals and bishops shrugged their shoulders over the barbarism of the Vulgate, and were serious over the Tusculan disputations. A dash of infidelity, in those days, was rather the mode at Rome.

Clement died, and that fine old Roman nobleman, "all of the olden time," Farnese, as Paul the Third, succeeded him in 1534: gradually a change, from mere tithe-and-tax-eating paganism to somewhat more ecclesiastical tendencies, began to come over the spirit of Mother Church. Not that the fine old octogenarian Roman nobleman had any prejudices of his own in favour of bothering a crotchety scholar of good family about any little peculiarities in his

creed. He was too much one of the olden time for that. But times are changing, you see! There is the council, which cannot by any possibility be staved off any longer. And really those troublesome Germans are making such a pother! And Charles the Fifth is talking disagreeable things about Church reform. It really is absolutely necessary to do a little respectability. So Paul the Third made cardinals of a whole bunch of the—really—most blameless and most earnest men he could find in the Church. The Romans rubbed their eyes, and began to think that the Church must truly be in danger when such strong measures were deemed necessary.

But in 1540 we find Carneseccchi getting into very dangerous company at Naples. He became intimate there, with the notorious Giovanni Valdez, a Spaniard, who did more, perhaps, than any other one man to infect Italy with heresies of the most "insinuating" and pernicious kind. He was a layman, too. As if a layman had any business to be troubling his head about how he was to be saved! Your easy-going, live-and-let-live infidel, who had no objection to a fat bishopric in commendam for himself or his son, who was content with a merry wink exchanged now and then with his good friends of the cloth, and a fie-fie joke under the rose—he was a good fellow enough in his way, and quiet old Mother Church was quite content to give wink for wink, and let him go to perdition as he would. But this pestilent fellow Valdez was always boring about his "justification!" He was the viceroy's secretary, too, which made the matter more annoying. And, moreover, he was an exceedingly pleasant and gentlemanlike man, an elegant scholar, by no means averse either in principle or practice to the rational enjoyment of life and its blessings, exceedingly popular among the cultivated nobles of that brilliant court—at that time the most intellectual in Italy, and, above all, especially, a favourite among the ladies, confound him! A pretty state of things, when high-born dames, instead of amusing their leisure with Boccaccio and smilingly accepting from their smiling father confessor a penance of six Ave Marias, to be repeated in expiation of that naughty pastime, began to ask him questions about justification by faith! Your Gallio-like heretics the Church could, or thought she could, in those days afford to disregard; but your pious heretic was intolerable! Then his social position and talents made this Valdez an influential man; and he had gathered about him in the gay and brilliant but not unlettered court of Naples, a little school of more or less gifted men, all infected with the same "abominable leprosy." A friend of his it was, who wrote that celebrated treatise "On the benefits of the death of Christ:" which of them, the most persevering researches of modern times have failed to discover. It was an exposition of the doctrine of "justification by faith," adapted to popular use. Its success was immense. It is known that many thousands of copies of it were circulated in all parts of Italy. And, of all the indications

of the successful vigour with which the terrible Fra Michele, first as inquisitor and then as pope, cleared Italy of heresy, perhaps the most striking and extraordinary is the fact that no single copy of this once popular book is known to exist. We are apt to imagine that any writing once committed to the safe-keeping of type, and disseminated in large quantities, *must* be secure against the chances of destruction. But, in so flattering ourselves, we reckon without taking into account the energies and perseverance of a Fra Michele. The little book was burned in vast piles in the market-places of the cities by thousands at a time.

The Church-in-danger tocsin, which was soon to put a new class of popes on the throne, had not yet rung out. And Carneseccchi, all canon and papal secretary as he was, could indulge in a little speculative heresy in good company, without serious inconvenience. But the malady seems to have grown upon him. The new thoughts seem to have occupied his mind more and more to the exclusion of other interests; and the fact reflects the general advance which the new ideas were making in the best minds of Italy. In 1541 we find him residing at Viterbo, again in the midst of a select little society all of his way of thinking.

A singular feature of that day in Italy was the existence of a very notable band of ladies of the highest birth and rank, all gifted, all celebrated for their beauty, all more or less remarkable for literary culture, and all suspected of heretical tendencies: all, as a contemporary writer phrases it, lame of the same foot. There was Vittoria Colonna. There was the lovely and fascinating Giulia Gonzaga. There were Lavinia della Rovere Orsini, and Teodora Sauli. And last, and not least in importance, there was Renée Duchess of Ferrara; though poor Renée must be excepted as to the personal beauty which characterised others of this blooming band of heretics. With all these ladies, our unorthodox canon was in more or less constant correspondence. The thing began to be unpleasantly talked about. It was "making himself too particular" to be thus the centre of a circle of heretics wherever he went. And we cannot but agree with the Church writers who complain that it was very provoking to see a man living in Rome—for he returned thither, it seems, from Viterbo, under the very noses of the Sacred College—and spending the revenues of very abundant Church preferment in furnishing means to declared enemies to the Church to enable them to betake themselves to that hotbed of perdition, Geneva, there to hear, as they audaciously said, the Gospel preached; which they could not hear at Rome. Was it to be expected that Mother Church could endure to see her children thus forwarded on their road to certain eternal perdition, and that, too, with her own money.

At last Canon Pietro Carneseccchi was cited by that fine old Roman nobleman, Pope Paul the Third, to give an account of his opinions, and purge himself of the suspicion of heresy. He



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could not be deemed an ascetically severe man, that fine octogenarian Roman nobleman, Pope Paul the Third. So, when the noble patrician Florentine canon appeared at his summons, and in answer to all accusations of unorthodox leanings, declared, in a general way, that it was all a mistake, and protested that he was a very dutiful and affectionate son of his Holiness, what could a fine old gentleman, all of the olden time, do, but say that he was extremely glad to hear it, that he doubted not it was all a mistake, and that it gave him much pleasure to confer upon the reverend canon Pietro Carnesecchi full absolution, and apostolical benediction. For the Church-in-danger bell had not rung out yet.

Notwithstanding the satisfactory termination of his first little misunderstanding with the apostolical successor of St. Peter, Canon Pietro Carnesecchi deemed it advisable to cease residing in Rome. Comfortably provided with ecclesiastical revenues, he started on a little heretical tour; passed some time in France; and visited other places, notorious for the gathering together of heretics. In 1552 he returned to Italy, but not to Rome. He passed some time at "Padua the learned," and resided awhile at Venice, and in both these cities specially frequented the society of those who were known to favour the "new" opinions, and kept up a continual correspondence with more decided heretics in other countries. And things were changed in Italy since Carnesecchi had received his absolution from Paul the Third and started on his travels. A very different Paul, the fourth of the name, had recently ascended the Papal throne, in 1555, while Carnesecchi was still at Venice. The Church was by this time thoroughly alarmed. The omnipresent Inquisition was watching the "purity of the faith" with lynx-eyed vigilance in every city in Italy. Paul the Fourth, that fierce old Caraffa, was continually stimulating the emissaries of the Holy Office to greater severity, and demanding hecatombs of heretics. A very much less overt case of heretical taint than that of Carnesecchi would, in those days, have sufficed to draw down the thunders of the Vatican. Thus, in 1557, Canon Pietro Carnesecchi was once more cited to appear at Rome, and answer to the accusation of rank heresy. But he was well aware that he had a very different pope to deal with, now, and a very different spirit in the Roman court generally. And he judged that this time it would be wise not to approach any nearer to the long sweep of the pontifical arm. He disobeyed the citation, was judged by contumacy, and pronounced a rebel to the Church, and a heretic. It was well for him that he was then under the valid protection of the Queen of the Adriatic. No other Italian government of that day, probably, would have hesitated an instant to give him up to the angry pope. Venice was at all times less obsequious to Roman encroachments on her sovereign authority, than any other state of Italy.

In 1559 Paul the Fourth died, and was succeeded by the weak and timid Pius the Fourth,

whose principal object was to keep things quiet, and give as little offence to anybody as might be. Under this pope, Carnesecchi thought he might venture back to his native Florence. Cosmo the First was then reigning there: a politic and long-headed tyrant, to whose influence in the conclave, Pius in great measure owed his elevation. This Cosmo was one of the worst of a bad race, whether looked at as a sovereign or a man. His influence on Tuscany was such and so lasting, that it would be worth while to attempt a somewhat complete portraiture of the prince who earned for himself the title of the Tuscan Tiberius, were it not that to do so would require more space than we can at present afford to the subject. Suffice it to say compendiously, that as a sovereign, the great object of his reign, pursued skilfully, perseveringly, and successfully, was the demoralisation and enervation of the people he reigned over; the reduction of them from the stout, turbulent, independent, spirited republicans they were when he came to the throne, to docile, effeminate, cowed slaves, prepared to be the subjects of a line of tyrants. This was Cosmo's work as a sovereign. As a man, his conduct was stained by the most hideous crimes and profligacy. But he was a great lover of respectability. A decent exterior and a veil of impenetrable thickness to hide the reality, was the maxim of Cosmo, and of most of his successors. He was an exceedingly pious prince, and at all times stood well with the Church—as was especially desirable to one who had so much need of the Church's *loosing* offices. The great ambition of his life was to be made, from being Duke of Florence, Grand-Duke of Tuscany. This he hoped to obtain from his good friend the pope; and would have obtained it with little difficulty from Pius the Fourth, had it not been that there were difficulties in the way, arising from the opposition of the emperor, who maintained that the making of dukes into grand-dukes formed no part of his powers. And Pius the Fourth was not one of those who could act in defiance of the emperor. For such a man, Cosmo had to wait till the next pope mounted the throne.

Meantime, the weak and yielding Pius the Fourth could not refuse to his good friend and supporter Cosmo, such a small matter as the absolution of a heretic. Carnesecchi, as has been said, had thought he might safely venture to Florence, as soon as Pius the Fourth ascended the throne. He had always been, as well as his fathers before him, an adherent of the Medici. He had been personally favoured with the friendship of Cosmo; and under these circumstances he had little difficulty in obtaining, as he had expected, his absolution from infallible Pius the Fourth, notwithstanding his condemnation by the equally infallible Paul the Fourth. He boldly went to Rome, with a good word of recommendation from his patron Cosmo, and returned fully "reconciled" to forgiving Mother Church. He was wont even on his return, as ecclesiastical writers recount with extreme indignation and disgust, to speak "with laughter!" of the absolution.

The merriment lasted all the time of the incumbency of Pius the Fourth. With the plenary absolution of the Church in his pocket, Canon Carnesecchi laughed his laugh, kept up his correspondence with Italian heretics in all parts of Europe, lived hand-and-glove with the "tainted ones" in his own city, and was often to be seen at Cosmo's table.

But in 1566 Pius the Fourth died. And who should be elected to succeed him but that terrible Fra Michele the Inquisitor—he under whose inquisitorship Carnesecchi had been condemned during the papacy of Paul the Fourth!\* Surely the canon must have turned pale when the news of this election was brought to Florence. Surely had he been wise he would have lost not a moment in putting the Alps—ay, and the ocean—between him and that terrible friar, now grown to be Pope Pius the Fifth. Probably he trusted in his plenary absolution, and in the protection of his powerful patron Cosmo. How grimly the old Inquisitor would have smiled, had he been told that a once-condemned heretic thought so to escape from his hands. Duke Cosmo protect a heretic! Has he no longer any desire, then, to be made grand-duke?

A few months after his elevation, the new inquisitor pope wrote a letter to Duke Cosmo, and sent it by the hand of no less a man than the Master of the Sacred Apostolical Palace. "Beloved son, and noble sir," writes the zealous and austere pope to the blood-stained profligate duke, in very apostolical, but not very classical, Latin, "we send you the Master of our Sacred Apostolical Palace, on a business which in the highest degree concerns the service of the Divine Majesty and the Catholic religion. He will present to you this our letter. And were it not for the exceeding heat of the weather—the letter is dated the 20th of July)—we should have entrusted this commission to Cardinal Paccio himself, so earnestly have we the matter at heart, and so important do we consider it. You may receive the communication of the above-mentioned Master of the Palace with as much confidence, as if we ourselves were speaking face to face. And may God so bless you as we give you from our heart our apostolical benediction!"

This letter was handed to Duke Cosmo as he sat at table. The Master of the Apostolical Palace was at once admitted. An autograph letter from his Holiness could not be too much honoured by immediate attention. Besides, what could the Holy Father have to say to so excellent a son of the Church as Cosmo, that could mar the conviviality of the banquet? Canon Carnesecchi was among the guests that day. The reverend messenger's business was soon told—much, we may fancy, in the manner of that of the policeman who enters a thieves' house-of-call to tell some member of the fraternity that he is "wanted." The reverend Canon Carnesecchi is wanted at Rome on accusation of heresy! No small consternation,

we may fancy, sat on the faces of those around the princely board. What answer? What was to be done? To give up a subject to Fra Michele, of terrible fame, omnipotent as sovereign pontiff, was to send him, not only to certain death, but to certain torments. But it is easy to elude, if not to refuse, the demand. A gracious reception, an answer on the morrow, &c., and the hideous treason to humanity may be avoided. The accused may in an hour or two be safe across the frontier.

But Cosmo knew well how such favours as he wanted of Rome could be won at the hands of Pius the Fifth. If doubt and consternation sat on every face around his "hospitable" board, the princely host was in no wise affected by either. His answer to the Holy Father's demand was prompt and decisive. There is the man. Take the heretic from among us; and tell the Holy Father that "if he had demanded of me to give up my own son, the heir to my crown, on such a charge, I should have done it as readily!"

The words are historical. Evidently here was a man to be made grand-duke, or anything else. Pope Pius the Fifth felt the full value of such a pillar of the Church, and was keenly touched by such exemplary devotion. He returned him a letter of thanks, expressing his extreme satisfaction, and saying that it would be well indeed for the Church and the service of God if the other princes of Christendom were like him. He told him that he assuredly would never forget his good service. And the sincerity of his ferocious gratitude may be estimated from an anecdote preserved for us, of his turning to a crucifix, and uttering an earnest prayer that his life might be spared until he should have an opportunity of rewarding so pious and admirable a prince!

It would be of small interest, thank Heaven, to English nineteenth-century readers to be told the thirty-four distinct positions, proved to have been advocated by Carnesecchi, which were all pronounced to be "either heretical, or erroneous, or rash, or scandalous." It is enough to say that none of them contain aught that could not be held by a good Christian, or, indeed, aught that militates against any Church doctrine, except manifest and special abuses. Of course there could be no doubt about the result. To aggravate the unpardonable nature of the guilt proved against Carnesecchi, it was added that he had contemplated escaping to Geneva, there to wallow in heresy unrestrained. The ecclesiastical power handed him over to the secular power. The Pope, that is, as bishop, handed him over to the Pope as king; and as the former feels it incompatible with the sacred nature of his office to take away life, it was left to the latter to condemn the enemy of the former to be burned. It was intimated to him that his life would be spared, if he would retract and recant. But he refused. As he had twice before evaded Rome's persecution by declaring himself orthodox, it must be concluded, either that he had

\* See volume i., page 412.

become more earnestly and conscientiously serious in his opinions, or—which is more probable—that he had no faith in the promised mercy. A Capuchin friar was sent to convert the condemned heretic. But he came back in horror, saying that the prisoner, instead of being converted to orthodoxy, tried to convert him to heresy. Evidently a dangerous customer to meddle with, and better killed before he bit others!

Carneseccchi was executed at the end of September, 1567. The Church historian, Baronius, is extremely indignant with those who assert that he was burned alive. That historian maintains with much virtuous indignation that Rome always either beheaded or strangled her heretics before burning them. The often-described vestment called the *san benito*, a frock painted with flames and devils, was put on the condemned; he was affixed to the stake; the *san benito* was set fire to; and while this was burning, the patient was beheaded.

This was the way in which heresy was "put down" in Italy; stunned, one may say, for three hundred years. For assuredly those who know Italy now, will not believe that it was killed.

#### THE LEVIATHAN CHEESE.

I THINK if the liberty and the power were given me to punish my bitterest enemy, I should cause him to become a giant. I can conceive no position likely to be more fruitful of misery and annoyance to him, or more fruitful of revengeful gratification to me. He would be one of a limited, but unfortunate, tribe, whose existence must constantly remind them that they are not made to measure. At every turn in the valley of life he would find himself a huge misfit. His head would bump against the upper cornice as he came in at any ordinary door; his legs would be difficult to dispose of, under the widest dining-table; his boots would cost him double the price of any other man's boots; his sixteen-shilling trouser-maker would strike, every time his broad countenance looked in at the shop-window; his appetite would be expensive; his omnibus conductor would never see him; and his cabmen would fly from him as they do from a well-known sixpenny passenger. If he indulged in reading, and were curious about the history of his fellows, he would open one of the most melancholy pages in the whole range of personal records. The general fate of kings seems sad enough, but the fate of giants is surely sadder. Some have been struck down by inspired mannikins: some have sunk under the degrading monotony of being nothing but a constant spectacle; while others have lived only as carriers of advertising placards.

The unfortunate destiny of giants animate, is shared by giants inanimate. The wicker representatives of Gog and Magog have, ere now, been half devoured by rats; the Colossus of Rhodes was hurled down by an early earthquake; the Pyramids still exist, but only as unproductive cemeteries; the largest picture in

London—the "Raising of Lazarus"—has been pining unpurchased, for years, amongst toys and parrots; and the most recent ambitious effort of joint-stock enterprise—the big ship—is little more, at present, than a disastrous experiment. Every town, and village, and country, can tell its story of some unwieldy local monster, who started into life with every prospect of a brilliant career, and ended as another example of the emptiness of human greatness. It matters little of what material this monster may have been made, for iron and wood have gone the way of flesh and blood, and stone has fallen under the inevitable doom. How, then, in the face of all this, could the villagers of West Pennard expect a happier destiny for that gigantic cheese, whose history has yet to be inserted in the archives of Somerset?

If the Queen of England had never been presented with a gigantic brown loaf (about the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight), it is more than probable that this once famous cheese would never have been heard of. The mind of West Pennard, as represented by its principal farmers, in tavern assembled, had come to the conclusion that a large loaf, without an equally large cheese, was worse than useless. As no presentation, however extraordinary, is considered too extravagant or absurd to make to the British Sovereign, the West Pennard farmers decided that an enormous cheese should be at once manufactured for royalty, and a committee was immediately formed to conduct the necessary business. An active canvass was commenced the next morning throughout the parish for contributions, and not a single farmer refused a liberal supply of milk. Some became so interested in the Leviathan Cheese that they gave their whole day's produce; and the contributions, taken together, amounted to the milk of seven hundred and thirty-seven cows.

The next step taken was to get a proper "vat" and "follower" made of solid mahogany; and the latter vessel was handsomely adorned with the royal arms. The eventful day being fixed, seven of the largest cheese-tubs in West Pennard were borrowed, the best dairy-woman in the parish was selected, and the lines of the Leviathan Cheese were laid down.

A few days afterwards, when the cheese was considered sufficiently pressed, and the donors had assembled in great force to witness the launch of their property, the first hitch occurred in the life of the giant. It stuck to the sides of its mahogany dwelling, and obstinately refused to come out without being taken to pieces. A council was immediately held to consult about this unexpected difficulty, and it was resolved that the experiment should be tried of grinding the curd again, and rubbing it with dry cloths, as too much whey was considered to be the cause of the failure. This second effort was crowned with the desired success, and a real Somersetshire cheese was produced, weighing about half a ton.

The fame of this giant cheese soon spread far and wide, and many hundreds of people came

from all parts of the county to see it. It remained under the care of the chosen dairy-woman until it was pronounced sufficiently firm to be moved; the price of admission for each visitor, in the mean time, being fixed at a shilling. At this point, one of the donors kindly offered to give up his parlour, a large and convenient room, to ripen it in, and this offer being accepted, it was removed to its new quarters, carefully bound up in its former mahogany casing to secure it from injury. The weight and size of the giant rendered it impossible to "turn" it without the aid of machinery, and an apparatus was constructed which brought this very necessary operation in cheese-making within the power of one person. Notwithstanding this invention, the rest of the farmers could not trust the handling of so valuable a prize to one man, and they assembled nearly every afternoon at the house of the keeper to watch the development of their property. As a want of hospitality is not a West Pennard failing, the host was very liberal with his best cider, and by the time the process of "ripening" was considered complete (a period of several months), the whole of his previous year's making of cider—from twenty to thirty hogsheads—had thoroughly disappeared. The number of nights on which late sounds of conviviality were heard roaring round this giant cheese are tenaciously remembered by many goodwives in West Pennard.

The cheese being now fit for presentation to her Majesty, a great meeting of shareholders was held, and a deputation chosen, consisting of three of the principal proprietors. To give this deputation greater importance, the parish factotum was elected to accompany it. That nothing might be wanting to render it worthy of the occasion, the four delegates were arrayed in new suits of clothes, made under general advice by a fashionable tailor.

The Leviathan Cheese, duly launched, was taken to London by this imposing guard of honour, and laid at the feet of her gracious Majesty. Its reception by royalty was everything that West Pennard could have wished, the only objection to the giant being its extreme youth. As it was not considered old enough to cut, her Majesty requested the delegates to take it back, and present it again at a more mature age, when she promised a donation of one hundred pounds to the poor of the giant's parish.

When the delegates returned to West Pennard, they gave a highly glowing account—in fact, many highly glowing accounts—of their reception at the palace. They spoke particularly of his Royal Highness Prince Albert in terms of the warmest admiration, and remarked, almost familiarly, that "they had never met a nicer fellow." So much did they dwell upon this portion of their narrative, that the original curiosity of their listeners and fellow-shareholders soon changed to jealousy. Knight-hood was the least honour expected to follow such a reception; a prospect not at all pleasing to the general body of contributors. This feeling grew at last into open rebellion, and at-

tempts were made to get possession of the Leviathan Cheese. A considerable reward was even offered to any one who would cut or damage it, and its trustees became so alarmed, that, at the cost of twelve pounds, they had a strong iron cage constructed for its safe-keeping, with a brilliant crown upon the top, to warn of all treasonable enemies. Not feeling secure even with this stronghold, and this emblem of authority, they caused heavy iron bars to be affixed to the windows of the room in which the caged giant was deposited; also to the mantelpiece, as some daring, disloyal chimney-sweep from Bath had undertaken to get down the chimney at night and basely earn the reward.

The three members of the deputation, omitting the factotum, resided at Sticklings, Woodlands, and East-street, and the united parish, fearing that, from the excitement and ill-feeling, the honour which seemed likely to fall upon it might be lost for ever, very wisely took the power of conferring the expected patents of nobility into its own hands; and the three farmers, under the action of the parochial will, became respectively the Marquis of Sticklings, the Duke of Woodlands, and Lord East-street. This proceeding rather increased the jealousy and activity of the opposition; and, by some means, they obtained possession of the mahogany vat and follower. Making a plaster of Paris imitation of the Leviathan Cheese, they started an exhibition in London, and kept it open for some months with considerable success. Upon this the Marquis of Sticklings, the Duke of Woodlands, and Lord East-street, having asked and gained the permission of her gracious Majesty to exhibit the real, original giant, they took a room, as all passing exhibitors used to do some ten years ago, at the Egyptian Hall. It was now the turn of the plaster of Paris party to make another move, and flying to Chancery, they obtained an injunction prohibiting the exhibition, in London, of the original Leviathan. Driven from the metropolis, the giant and its trustees went to the country, and pitched their tents, to some purpose, in several of the largest towns in Somersetshire. If the Marquis of Sticklings, the Duke of Woodlands, and Lord East-street had been ordinary showmen, with no recently acquired and extraordinary dignity to maintain a fair amount might have been realised by the exhibition of the giant; but, as they were very careful not to disgrace their titles by any display of meanness or economy, they spent all the money they received, neglected their farms, and were several hundred pounds out of pocket besides. The plaster of Paris party were also losers by the contest, their law and other expenses amounting to a nearly equal sum.

The Leviathan Cheese was ultimately taken to its old abode, the residence of the Marquis of Sticklings, where it remained until the death of that esteemed nobleman. It was then removed to the house of the Duke of Woodlands, where it rested, an unfortunate, worn-out, neglected giant, until his grace gave up farming, and took upon himself the management of the Old Down



Inn, on the Mendip Hills. The history of the giant cheese, from this moment, becomes exceedingly obscure. Individual testimony fades away, and report—the vaguest kind of report—only stands in its place. This report asserts that the giant cheese was tried, and found lamentably wanting. Its greatest friends, after tasting it, could not conscientiously pronounce it to be first-rate. It went the way of all giants, leviathans, mammoths, and nine days' wonders. Let us draw a veil over its wretched ending: it was given to the pigs.

Though dead, and consumed in every material sense, like many more once famous animate and inanimate giants, it still lives again in immortal verse. His grace the Duke of Woodlands composed a song about it, which he had wedded to immortal music, and which, after the fashion of Homer, he was proud of singing to himself.

#### WRITTEN IN MY CELL.

I SUPPOSE I write this in the desperate hope of awakening sympathy in some human heart, albeit I shall never know it. It is a dreadful thing to go to the gallows abhorred by everybody: it is a more dreadful thing to have deserved it.

Not the gallows! it is not *that* I am afraid of. When I heard the words, "To be hanged by the neck till you are dead," I could have blessed the judge for that righteous and most merciful sentence. Anything to escape from the intolerable loathing of my fellow-creatures! Yet there is not one of them who, in detestation of my crime, has less of pity for me than I myself. The thought of pain, of suffering by way of expiation, is a relief to me; I would have it crueler, more shameful, if it might be. No horror that could be inflicted, would compare with the tremendous agony of living on, after such a deed. I *must* hope, as I suppose we all do, that death will bring some change involving, if not pardon and peace, some oblivion of the unendurable present. At times, I fancy it will all prove a dreadful dream; *that I never did it.*

I set out to relate how it happened. As no eye will read this until the hand which writes it, is mouldering in the grave, I can have no object to serve but the avowed one of soliciting a grain of compassion, which, I know, can never be accorded while I live.

From my childhood, as far back as I can remember, I was of an eager, passionate nature, impulsive to a degree which would often have covered me with confusion and ridicule, but for the check of an unconquerable shyness, partly inherent, partly the result of circumstances. A plain-featured, awkward boy, a posthumous son by my mother's first marriage (she wedded again in the second year of her widowhood), my surroundings might have been happier. I was brought up strictly rather than affectionately, under the care of a stepfather. He ruled his family absolutely, but with as much justice as was consonant with a certain narrow-mindedness common to men of his stamp. I

think his creed, one of the severest as regards this life and the next, intensified this defect of his nature; I am sure it did not make him, or my mother, or me, any better or happier. She had not sufficient force of character, and respected that of her husband too much to attempt or to effect any modification of it. So he had his own way in everything.

I never loved my stepfather. His relation to me had, I believe, no share in influencing my feelings; they would have been the same had he been my real father: indeed I always considered him as such. I may have taken advantage of the fact of my paternity in disobeying him in after life, but I certainly dared not do it then.

Ours was a dull household: mine was a sombre boyhood. I had plenty of repression, little love; that little bestowed timidly by my mother, the instincts of whose heart were wiser than the dictates of her husband's head. I believe her child stood paramount in her affections, and that she had given him a stepfather for his sake, rather than her own, being left very poor at her husband's decease. But she never exhibited this partiality so openly as to excite his successor's suspicion or jealousy. He might have grown kinder if he had had children of his own; but, with the exception of a baby which died in its infancy, my mother brought him none. I have heard that he seemed sorry and disappointed at this.

We lived in London, but saw little or no company, went to no parties, balls, theatres, or entertainments, my stepfather's creed and inclination disposing him against all such indulgences. He sent me to a good day-school, kept me to my tasks at home, allowed me no more play that could be prevented, and hated all books, except "serious" ones. "A pack of lies and nonsense," was his ordinary denunciation of works of fiction. I read them secretly, when the opportunity offered; they afford me almost the only pleasant retrospection I retain of my boy-days. I mention these things but in illustration of the circumstances amid which my character was formed.

Passionate, impulsive, and shy, these, I repeat, were its predominant features; the latter resulting from my comparative isolation from youth of my own age, and from a consciousness of awkwardness and plainness of feature. I was joked on both subjects by my schoolfellows until I became angrily sensitive to them, and painfully confirmed in my shame-facedness. This, and the repressive influences at home, induced a morbid habit of reserve, which my approbation often burst through, to my subsequent chagrin and mortification. As any indication of temper brought correction or sharp comment from my stepfather, I had additional reason for self-control, but, until manhood, I never attained much more than the semblance of it. Then it deceived people, and in some degree myself, with respect to my disposition. If none of this had been forced upon me, if my eager, ardent nature had been allowed healthy vent; if what was good within me had ripened

in the sunshine of affection, what bad, firmly but tenderly repressed, I might, at this hour, be an honoured and happy man, instead of a condemned murderer. But God knows, and He only.

School-days over, I entered my stepfather's office. He was a solicitor in good practice. I had no inclination towards the profession, but his suggestion carried its weight of authority, my mother considered it "very respectable," and I had hardly turned my thoughts in any definite direction. It answered indifferently well, and in due time I was articulated.

Coming manhood did little towards emancipating me from the restraints of home. I had scarcely any command of money; and this, with a standing requisition that I should be in-doors every night by ten o'clock, virtually debarred me from amusement abroad. Naturally, I mutinied; and, after a struggle, effected the abolition of the latter privation, and some, but no considerable, improvement in the former. Both were conceded unwillingly and after pertinacious opposition, originating a series of quarrels which, after my mother's death, terminated in the total estrangement of myself and stepfather.

She was always weak, I think constitutionally inclined to consumption, and died in my twenty-first year. Her loss affected me extravagantly, but temporarily. My stepfather's sorrow was, like himself, grave and undemonstrative.

I forgot my loss the more rapidly from a youthful passion which then occupied me for the first time. It is my intention to speak only of circumstances which had a direct influence on my character, and this boy-love may be dismissed in a few sentences.

I fell in love with a sister of one of my acquaintances: a handsome, merry girl, my senior by a year, a coquette by nature. I submitted to her whims for twelve months, when we quarrelled our last quarrel and parted. The impetuosity with which I urged my suit had overborne her original distaste for my ugliness—it was no longer mere plainness—and my earnestness frightened her. She broke off, in spite of miserable humiliation on my part, leaving me to digest the pain and mortification of it. When she hears of my deed (she married and went to India) she will think she had a happy escape. Perhaps she had.

I suffered more than common from so common an experience. It made me doubly sensitive to my defects, natural and acquired. I brooded retrospectively, nursed my wounded self-esteem into embittered egotism, yet despised myself for my recent failure. I laboured to attain self-control, and, as aforesaid, achieved at least the mask of it. At this period the alienation between myself and stepfather reached a crisis, and terminated in my withdrawal both from his office and home.

I was able to keep myself, having acquired, with a world of pains and at the exercise of an amount of patience foreign to my nature, the art of stenography; though not a proficient in

the craft, I had earned money by it. Besides which, I presently began to write for magazines and periodicals, at first poorly enough, and with proportionate remuneration. Long ago, perhaps in consequence of my stepfather's prohibition, I had become an eager reader of fiction, and this, germinating in a feverish, though diseased, temperament, produced fruit of a sort which yet commanded a certain price.

Years passed, and I prospered, leading a very different life from that endured in my former home, but not a better one. My stepfather's example had disgusted me with professions of religion; I had no check of kindred or friends to restrain me from vicious indulgence, for my disposition was not calculated to attract those who could have helped me to purer pleasures, nor was it improved by pecuniary success.

That accursed shame-faceness, always my enemy, now deepened by a sense of impurity—I never went far enough to confound evil with good—impelled me to reject kindly advances made by the better sort of my own class; among the worst, I had companions, but no friends. My employers respected my intellect, but disliked me. Not to exaggerate my profligacy, let me state that it was rather spasmodic than habitual, nor ever openly defiant of the decencies of society. I lived this life for ten years. When, at times, I longed for a wife, a home, the recollection of past mortification, of present unfitness, of *my ugliness*, deterred me from seeking them. And, self-indulgence palling upon my appetite, I presently devoted myself exclusively to literary ambition.

Four years of persistence produced their results. I come now to the train of circumstances which brought me *here*.

It was at Scarborough, whither I had gone in consequence of indisposition, that chance made me acquainted with her uncle. You know whom I mean by *her*—there is no need to mention names. A watering-place intimacy sprang up between us, renewed at the uncle's request on our return to the metropolis. He was an old bachelor, fond of books and curious about authors. He invited me to his house, introduced me to his brother's family. I went there idly, out of courtesy to him, or out of curiosity. I wish I had fallen dead on the threshold!

They were hospitable people, dwelling in a pleasant house in a London suburb, with a garden and conservatory; its owner had retired from business on something more than competence. His family consisted of a son and two daughters. She was the youngest. What did I see in her that it should light up such a fire in my heart?

A girl of sixteen, with kind, thoughtful, brown eyes; soft, smooth, fair hair; and rosy cheeks. That was all. A mere girl, less than half my age, pretty, very pretty, but neither clever nor beautiful. I had looked upon scores of faces more perfect in feature, brighter in intellect, without any quickening of the pulse or more than transient admiration. Yet I saw and loved her. If I could tell how imperiously

the passion took possession of me, how it enthralled my whole nature to the exclusion of everything but that one tyrannic idea, the crowning horror that grew out of it might be understood, if not pitied.

It began innocently enough, God knows. I went to the house, as I have said, at first in company with her uncle, then with or without him, always obtaining a cordial welcome. There was a goodness, an unaffected kindness in the little family, manifest in its mutual relations, its behaviour to friends and visitors, which won upon me in spite of my distrust of myself and others. I had never seen anything like it, never known how much of affection, of unconscious self-sacrifice, of mutual esteem and forbearance might be comprised in the one word *home*.

They were not brilliant people, nor more highly bred or educated than thousands of their class. They read books, went occasionally to the theatre, loved music, dancing, and innocent pleasures, and were glad to admit their friends to a share of them. The father, a cheery, hospitable man, liked company, and his wife saw only through his eyes. For a time, my shyness kept me in the background, but the unvarying kindness with which I was received gradually dissipated my reserve. I loved the family and felt better and happier for knowing them.

The girls often sang to us of evenings. I wonder whether I am unusually sensitive to sweet voices, that hers should have affected me as it did, waking up some unearthly responsive longing in my soul as for something I had never known, something I should never attain, which was delicious, yet exquisitely painful.

Her girlish ways, her manner as she went about her household duties or performed the little rites of hospitality, possessed an indescribable fascination for me, totally irreconcilable with reason or with my colder judgment; for, strange as it may seem, I knew her as she was, even when most under the influence of the passion which controlled me. I knew it, but had no power to break the enchantment.

She never suspected it—as how should she? I was so much her elder that she regarded me as out of the pale of those who might be attracted by her girlish beauty. To her, a girl of sixteen, I was an *odd-looking* man, a visitor, a friend of the family, nothing more. My intellectual superiority made her timid. She never dreamed of her power over me.

The touch of her hand, accidental contact with her dress, the upturned glance of her kind calm eyes, filled me with tremor; my whole nature became resonant to her presence. When I conversed, it was always with a secret hope that she would listen or reply. I never spoke to her, without a miserable desire to interest her, and a wretched sense of failure. I revolved, over and over again in my mind, the trivial words that passed between us, pondering on the tones in which she had spoken, and nursing the unrest which devoured me like a burning fever.

So it went on, day by day, week after week, for six months.

There was a handsome lad of fifteen, a school-fellow of her brother, who came to the house, and whose fancy selected her as the object of a boyish passion: one rife with day-dreams and romance, but of no more depth or consequence than such fancies ordinarily are. I noticed it at the outset. I believe I discovered it before he himself had any distinct consciousness of the feeling. When evident to all, and something of a joke in the family, she was secretly pleased, though she affected to look down upon him as her junior—a year is a great gap in a girl's estimation. Too simple-hearted to comprehend coquetry, she yet knew she was pretty, and her admirer's passion flattered and amused her innocent vanity. I think she had no idea that anything serious would come of it, but she certainly liked and listened to him.

That tortured me. The boy was, in earnest. I have said he was handsome, and the contrast between his fresh youthful face, his buoyant spirits and healthy nature, with mine, filled me with gall and wormwood. *He*, in spite of his bashfulness and blushing modesty, could find topics enough to talk about, and could interest her. There were no awkward intervals of silence between *them*. She smiled or laughed when he entered the room, and called him "Harry." I have sat, time after time, and watched them with unutterable envy and unutterable misery in my heart. I wonder now, that I restrained myself so well, but nobody suspected me—not till the dreadful end.

The family went out of town, in the month of June, to a village, eastward of London, on the border of a forest. They had humble friends there, and generally stayed at the cottage of a woman who had been her and her sister's nurse. And I and the uncle were invited to visit them at pleasure—it was barely a three hours' coach journey. In August, I did so, as it happened, alone.

I met the father in the footpath across the meadow which led to the village, on his way to town, and he—God help him! I was never again to see his face turned towards me in friendship and confidence—gave me a cheery greeting, and bade me go on and enjoy myself, promising to return at nightfall. "The girls are starting for a pic-nic in the forest," he said; "you'll be just in time."

I saw her at the window in the cottage gable, with a garland of summer flowers in her hair, laughing through the honeysuckle at those below. She smiled and nodded a welcome to me. There were not many present: her brother, sister, two cousins (girls), a country friend, and Harry. I knew he was stopping with them, yet his presence gave me a pang as if my heart had been suddenly gripped by a cruel human hand. They all seemed glad to see me, and, my respects paid to the mother, who did not care to be of the party, we set out for the forest together. In spite of his sisters' objections, their brother took with him a foolish pistol which he had, for the purpose of shooting at a mark.

Throughout that sultry summer's day, the

sun of which was not to set without leaving on my forehead the brand of Cain, by dusty lane and green hedgerow, among the trees in the forest, Harry kept by her side, driving me mad. He was happy, very happy, for the occasion increased her natural good-humour and good spirits, perhaps her liking for her boyish lover. A fortnight of daily, almost hourly, intimacy in that idle holiday time, had naturally brought them closer together, and he, at once intoxicated by his passion and the sweet influences surrounding him, was more enamoured than ever. So he kept by her side, nobody challenging his right to that position. I see them now: he with his youthful, glowing face, all admiration and enjoyment: she, in her light dress and straw hat, her sweet eyes just raised in answer to him and a smile on her lips. One of the party jestingly called my attention to them once—as if *that* were needed.

We rambled about in the forest until noon-tide, and for an hour longer, presently dining in an open space where were some fallen trees and a little spring. He sat at her feet, and as much as possible engrossed her conversation. Her brother joked him on it, and I joined in the laugh. We were all very merry together, and my conduct excited no suspicion. I talked gaily, and observed her looking at me more than once in quiet surprise. Fury and despair were raging in my heart, yet I talked lightly and merrily; and, when the brother proposed that we should try our skill in shooting at an extemporised target, I bore my part like a boy amongst boys.

Tiring of this and of other sports, we rambled hither and thither. Then, I feigned drowsiness, and they left me, to come back in an hour or so, bidding me take care of our dinner baskets. The brother left his pistol; it was heavy, and he tired of his plaything. When they had all gone off among the bushes, I sat up, on a fallen tree, and loaded the weapon. I declare before Heaven, I had no thought then of the dreadful use to which I was soon to put it; I had an inclination to play with the idea of suicide.

It was fascinating, in my maddened morbid state, to put the muzzle between my teeth, and fancy what pulling the trigger would effect. I imagined it in detail. A horrible crash and a great darkness. I should be found on their return, lying beside the log, dead. How shocked they would be, how horrified! What would *she* say? Would she be sorry? How little she or any one in the world would suspect the cause of it! I should carry my secret with me into the next world; perhaps I should be at rest, and people would pity me.

The thought grew upon me, so that I rose to dissipate it: rose and strolled off among the trees, with the accursed pistol in my pocket. My hands behind me, my head bowed, my eyes on the grass, I went, walking slowly, thinking of her

It might have been five minutes, it might have been an hour, when I heard a girl's voice, carolling merrily—a voice and song I knew well. A dizziness was in my ears, my heart throbbled tumultuously and painfully. I raised my eyes and saw her alone, coming towards me, down a footpath into which I had wandered.

She had never looked prettier or kinder. There was a rosy flush of health and exercise upon her cheek, a sweet light of love in her eyes, and a glory of afternoon sunshine streaming through the boughs upon her fair brown hair. Something told me that the boy's ardour had won, if not a reciprocation of his passion, at least an unusually favourable hearing. I turned, and we walked side by side. "Where were the others?" I asked.

"Oh, coming, but a long way behind. She had run away from them." And she laughed.

"Why?"

"They had teased her. She was glad to have met me, as I would take her part."

"And Harry?" She blushed, and, returning an evasive answer, stole a sidelong glance behind. I looked behind, too. There was no one visible.

"He loves you," I said. She blushed deeper than before, and turned her face away, and we walked on in silence for a few seconds. Then it came. "I love you!" I said. "Do you know what a man's love is?" And I poured forth a flood of passionate, incoherent words, such as cannot be recalled or written down, such as men sometimes utter once in a lifetime.

She listened, amazed—affrighted. There was more than that in her face. As I seized her hand and told her of my hopelessness and agony, I saw, distinctly, in the girlish countenance, a look of repugnance and aversion. She broke from me, and attempted to run away. The next moment, I stood with the discharged pistol in my hand, a little smoke curling upwards from its muzzle.

\* \* \* \* \*

What need to narrate how I fled from the spot, the long red bars of sunset streaming after me through the wood, like the fires of Hell? How I longed for death, yet had not the courage to slay myself? How I gave myself up to justice for that murder, was tried, found guilty, and condemned to death?

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